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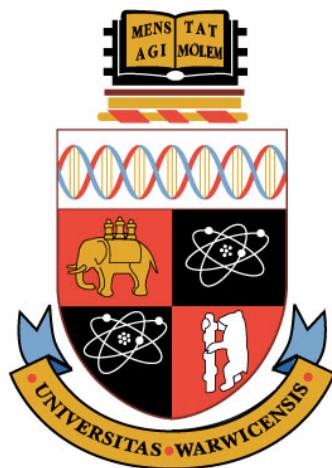
Incubating Extremist Terrorism: The UK Islamic Fundamentalist Movement 1989-2014

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Abstract

The emergence of Islamist terrorism in the UK has its genesis within an environment socially constructed by the organization of fundamentalist Muslims. Since 1989, Islamic preachers arriving in London from the Middle East have religiously mobilized hundreds of British Muslims drawing them into an extremist milieu termed the “Islamic Fundamentalist Movement” by the author. Followers are encouraged to adopt extreme political narratives and pursue activities designed to re-establish an Islamic Caliphate. Contrary to the prevailing discourse, Islamic fundamentalist Muslims are far from constituting a homogenous set of individuals. Based on age, overseas connections, experience of conflict and religiosity, they each fulfill specific tasks. These include but are not limited to recruitment, preaching, fundraising, facilitating and combative jihad. Through socialisation and participation in this movement, a minority of adherents have crossed the line and developed a mindset in which terrorism has become normalised. For this subgroup of extreme fundamentalists, suicide bombing against fellow citizens is considered a legitimate means in which to defend co-religionists, challenge western interference in Muslim lands and support the recently established Islamic State that now spans Northern Iraq and Syria. This doctoral study draws heavily upon recently obtained court transcripts, interviews with counter terrorism officers, politicians, journalists and counter radicalisation workers in order to provide a unique insight to the environment from which the individuals responsible for major UK terrorism conspiracies witnessed since 2003 have emerged.

Keywords

Islam, Islamic Fundamentalism, Domestic Terrorism, Extremism, Jihad, Al-Qaeda, Islamic State

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Declaration

This thesis is entirely the original work and therefore copyright of Lewis Herrington. It has not been submitted for a degree at any another university.

British Prime Minister David Cameron

“We must be clear: to defeat the ideology of extremism we need to deal with all forms of extremism – not just violent extremism. We must ban preachers of hate from coming to our countries. We must proscribe organisations that incite terrorism against people at home and abroad. And we must stop the so called non-violent extremists from inciting hatred and intolerance in our schools, our universities and yes, even our prisons. Of course there are some who will argue that this is not compatible with free speech and intellectual inquiry. But I say: would we sit back and allow right-wing extremists, Nazis or Klu Klux Klansmen to recruit on our university campuses? No”

David Cameron Speech to the UN General Assembly 25th September 2014

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Introduction

This doctoral thesis presents the results of a three-year study into the relatively modern phenomenon in which British Muslims have pursued domestic terrorism. Before 2001, this specific community were rarely amongst the set of persons implicated, charged and convicted of terrorism offences in the UK. The cause of Irish Nationalism dominated the legal landscape. Since 2001 however, British born and raised second-generation Muslim men have featured in almost every large-scale counter terrorism investigation carried out by the security agencies. Between 2003 and 2013, prosecutors convicted approximately sixty individuals born and or at least partially raised in the UK of major terrorism offences. In each of the roughly ten plots or conspiracies, evidence presented in court firmly established a clear intention by the defendants to detonate improvised explosives devices amongst the civilian population. At the height of the terrorist threat in 2005, the Security Service (commonly referred to as MI5) stated it was monitoring as many as thirty terrorist-related plots designed to kill UK citizens and damage the economy.¹

In June 2012, the director of MI5 Jonathan Evans suggested the Arab Spring had facilitated a second coming for Islamic fundamentalists. British would-be jihadists, he suggested, are now heading to the Middle East in pursuit of training, because ‘parts of the Arab world have again become a permissive environment for Al-Qaeda’.² Counter terrorism officers believe that British Muslims today waging combative jihad in Syria have the potential to network with experienced facilitators and pursue terrorism in the UK.³ As recently as January 2013, the Prime Minister David Cameron framed the current terrorist threat in terms of growing “Al-Qaeda

¹ E. Manningham-Butler, ‘The International Terrorist Threat to the UK’, Speech given at Queen Mary's College, November 9, 2006, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/about-us/who-we-are/staff-and-management/director-general/speeches-by-the-director-general/the-international-terrorist-threat-to-the-uk.html>, (accessed 16th February 2015)

² J. Evans, quoted by N. Hopkins, ‘MI5 warns al-Qaida regaining UK toehold after Arab spring’, *Guardian Online*, 25th June 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jun/25/mi5-uk-terrorism-threat-warning>, (accessed 16th February 2015)

³ Private email between the author and a counter terrorism officer from SO15, New Scotland Yard (31st October 2013)

franchises”.⁴ Critically, this research project has sought to develop our understanding of why men born and raised in a modern, secular, democratic society readily volunteer to pursue jihad overseas and why a minority commit acts of terrorism, typically sacrificing their own lives in the process.

Drawing overwhelmingly on primary research including interviews with former UK home secretaries, this dissertation adds an original narrative to the discourse surrounding “Islamic Terrorism”. In particular, acts of religious and seemingly politically orientated violence carried out in the UK by British Muslims, which began around 2003 and continues to this day. Elite interviews conducted with government ministers, anti-terrorism police, counter radicalisation workers and journalists suggest this contemporary threat to national security is a logical, inescapable consequence of an environment socially constructed by the organisation and mobilisation of fundamentalist Muslims that began in London circa 1995. The European Commission’s expert group on violent radicalisation agree on the importance of an *environment* made of up like-minded individuals as an enabler for terrorism. Reporting in 2008, the group stated clearly:

All diverse political radicalisation waves that resulted in terrorism have thrived in an enabling environment characterised by a widely shared sense of injustice among concerned segments of the population. Sentiments of injustice, exclusion and humiliation have always been powerful forces in politics and prime movers for change.⁵

Proponents of social network theories contend that radicalisation is transmitted and intensified through collective affiliations. Drawing on biographical evidence, CIA analyst Mark Sageman argues that violent radicalisation of Muslim youth takes place through bonds of friendship, kinship, discipleship and other common social networks.⁶ In a sample of 100 “militant-jihadists”, Sageman found that only 13 attributed their

⁴ D. Cameron, *Speech to the World Economic Forum*, Thursday 24 January 2013, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/prime-minister-david-camerons-speech-to-the-world-economic-forum-in-davos/>, (accessed 16th January 2015)

⁵ European Commission, ‘Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism’, *Commission's Expert Group on European Violent Radicalisation*, 2008, http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20080500_cscp_report_vries.pdf (accessed 15th September 2014)

⁶ M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, p.115

affiliation with “jihad” solely to their religious beliefs and without the intervention of friends. It is becoming increasingly clear that an “enabling environment” is necessary for the emergence of terrorism. Unlike their counter parts in Palestine and now increasingly across Iraq and Syria, British Muslims who commit acts of terrorism have no experience of occupation. Factors that might have encouraged a young Palestinian to volunteer as a suicide bomber for Hamas are unlikely to have played a role in motivating the 2005 London bombers.

Absent of the sense of injustice typically experienced in Palestine and commonly associated with daily humiliation and oppression, Muslims in Europe have relied heavily on social networks, political ideology and the significant influence of extremist preachers in order to develop the mindset necessary to volunteer as suicide bombers. Disseminated by immigrant preachers fleeing persecution during the 1990s, the ideology responsible for the London bombings spread quickly across Muslim communities in the UK. Popular amongst students and those on the fringes of society, extreme religious and political narratives helped foster a mindset in which terrorism became a legitimate response to a perceived western war on Islam. Following an exhaustive review of the current literature and available evidence, this dissertation argues:

Acts of terrorism carried out by British Muslims since the turn of the twenty first century have been the inevitable consequence of an environment socially constructed by the organisation of religiously mobilised Islamic fundamentalists in the UK. Termed the “Islamic Fundamentalist Movement” by the author, followers have been encouraged to adopt extreme political narratives and pursue activities designed to re-establish an Islamic Caliphate (Empire). Through socialisation and participation in this movement, a minority of adherents have crossed the line and developed a mindset in which terrorism has become normalised. For a subgroup of fundamentalist British Muslims, suicide bombing against fellow citizens is considered a legitimate means in which to defend co-religionists, challenge western interference in Muslim lands and support the recently established Islamic State that now spans Northern Iraq and Syria.

In order to expand the above thesis, the following dissertation consists of five substantive chapters. Individually and collectively, this new literature widely

examines the environment socially constructed through the organisation of Islamic fundamentalist Muslims, specifically the role it plays as an incubator of extremism leading to terrorism. Chapter 1 lays important foundations by introducing core tenets of the Islamic faith. Critically and without apology, it asks whether violence sanctioned in the Quran may serve as the basis upon which terrorism has become normalised amongst a minority of British Muslims. Building on a basic introduction to domestic terrorism in the UK presented towards the end of the first chapter, the second chapter then formally charts the origins and contemporary re-emergence of Islamic fundamentalism as an agent of political and social mobilisation. Embryonic in 1930's Egypt as part of the struggle against western colonialism, political narratives rooted in a strict interpretation of Islam led to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism around the world. Heavily suppressed in the Middle East, preachers fleeing prosecution transplanted this part religious part political ideology to the UK towards the late 1990s.

Drawing upon a significant archive of literature published by extremist preachers towards the end of the century, chapter three deconstructs the core tenets of fundamentalist ideology. More than simply a rejection of western foreign policy, the individuals responsible for the London bombings were educated to believe strongly in the superiority of Sharia law, the obligation of Jihad as well as the need to completely eradicate the state of Israel. By understanding this polycot of extremist beliefs, it becomes clear why ending "western interference" in the Middle East is insufficient to satisfy the demands of terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda. Following on from this critical examination of ideology, chapter four offers a detailed study of the activities carried by fundamentalists Muslims in the UK and overseas designed to help re-establish the Islamic Caliphate. During the development of this thesis, British Muslims undertaking the most important activity, namely "Jihad", have contributed to the successful rise of *The Islamic State of Iraq and Levant* (ISIS) today renamed simply "The Islamic State" (IS). While enjoying almost no international recognition and indeed widely rejected by the majority of the worlds Muslims, the Islamic State governs territory greater than the United Kingdom and provides welfare services including everything from waste disposal to education. Acts of terrorism carried out against western nations today, for example Sydney 2014 and Paris 2015 are no longer about establishing the Caliphate. The objective now is to show solidarity with the

mujahedeen and help deter Arab and Western aggression designed to destabilise the new regime.

Using ten unique case studies, the penultimate chapter of this dissertation seeks to demonstrate a direct link between Islamic fundamentalism and acts of terrorism witnessed in the UK since 2003. Within each case, evidence suggests the environment socially constructed by the organisation of fundamentalist Muslims has been a necessary condition for the emergence of domestic terrorism in the UK. For example, all four of the July 7th 2005 suicide bombers internalised extreme political narratives promoted by fundamentalist preachers and all four of them undertook activities designed to re-establish the Islamic Caliphate, in particular sending finance and equipment to the Taliban as well as volunteering for Jihad in Afghanistan. In the final chapter, which sets out conclusions and policy recommendations, the author critically reflects on the British government's response to the organisation, politics and activities of fundamentalist Muslims in the UK. Specifically, attention turns to how policy makers have firstly recognised the threat posed and secondly, sought to disrupt the milieu from which a significant number of individuals convicted of terrorism offences have emerged. The second half of the concluding chapter then presents a series of recommendations designed to assist in the development of counter terrorism strategy. Objectively, the author has sought a balance between civil liberties and the clear need to combat further acts of terrorism carried out by fundamentalist Muslims in the UK. Moving forward now, the remaining sections of this introductory chapter present in detail each of the five substantive chapters that constitute the doctoral thesis.

Islam, Fundamentalism, Moderation and Terrorism

At the centre of this doctoral study is the Islamic faith, a religion followed by over a billion adherents worldwide. Even the most liberal writer on terrorism cannot legitimately ignore the importance of religion and the prospect of "divine rewards" offered to Muslims who volunteer for suicide bombing. Consequently, chapter one begins by examining the relationship between Islam and Terrorism questioning the legitimacy afforded to those who engage in political violence out of a broad interpretation of the Quran. To discourage potential revolution, Western governments have widely encouraged the dichotomisation of moderate and fundamentalist Muslims

in order to isolate and de-legitimize the latter. Divide and conquer therefore appears to be the government's strategy for challenging and disrupting Islamic fundamentalism. While critics applaud moderate Muslims for rejecting violence and supporting democracy, concurrently the government clamps down and seeks to marginalise fundamentalists who pursue Jihad and promote anti-western political narratives.

In concluding this first chapter, the author makes an argument for mainstream adoption of the term *Islamic fundamentalist extremist terrorism* as a label to describe acts of political violence carried out by British Muslims since 2003. Within this dissertation, the author refers to men born and raised in the UK who volunteer to undertake terrorist operations as *extreme fundamentalists*. This well considered label more adequately captures the religious nature of what others refer to simply as "Islamist terrorism". Importantly, it narrows the focus of liability for terrorism away from the majority of Muslims who reject violence, to the minority of Islamic fundamentalists willing to commit terrorism against fellow citizens. Furthermore, by prefixing the word "extreme", the term also communicates that while there may be a wide pool of fundamentalists in the UK (those who subscribe to universal adoption of sharia), only a small number agree with terrorism in which to achieve it.

Rise of the Islamic Fundamentalist Movement

Since the mid-1990s, Islamic fundamentalists in the UK have organised into a de-facto socio-political movement. Strict obedience to the core principles of Islam provided and continues to provide the basis for their organisation, socialisation and mobilisation as a political force. Islamic fundamentalism certainly did not originate in the UK. This second chapter traces the origins for this devout interpretation of Islam that has mobilised generations, back to the years following the collapse of the Islamic Empire in 1924. Before WWII and the relative peace enjoyed through the establishment of the United Nations, western colonialists sought to dominate and plunder the Middle East of its natural resources. Fighting back, Islamic fundamentalists competed with Arab nationalists in establishing political opposition and attracting public support for the pursuit of independence. One particular group established in the 1930's, "The Muslim brotherhood", proved particularly popular, much to the alarm of the authoritarian Egyptian government.

Influential writings by Egyptian scholar Sayyid Qutb, especially his seminal book “Milestones”, provided the underlying political ideology of the *brotherhood* and even today, this book continues to strongly influence and direct the activities of fundamentalist Muslims convicted of the most serious terrorism offences. Fearing the growing popularity of Islamists, autocratic rulers encouraged by the west, led a harsh clampdown on preachers and scholars who advocated the re-establishment of an Islamic State and a world governed according to Shariah (God’s law). Executed by the Egyptian state, Qutb became a martyr for the cause, an inspiration to generations of fundamentalists seeking to realise his religious and political ambitions. Perhaps the most noted student of Qutb is arguably the Egyptian scholar Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Avoiding execution, Dr Zawahiri dedicated his life to the fundamentalist cause and eventually became leader of international terrorist group Al-Qaeda after the 2011 killing of Osama Bin Laden.

Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, Islamic fundamentalism regained momentum. Buoyed up by their perceived victory over a superpower, veteran Afghan mujahedeen formed new international groups aligned by a set of common interests and objectives. Although focused on liberating their respective homelands, these Islamic fundamentalists groups shared an overarching goal of re-establishing an Islamic Caliphate. Comparable with the period of Sayyid Qutb, Middle Eastern dictators supported financially and militarily by the West were again able to suppress this modern revolution. Faced with overwhelmingly persecution for their political and religious beliefs, outspoken Muslim clerics fled to Europe. Protected by the very liberal democracy and respect for human rights they openly rejected and sought to replace, men like Abu Qatada soon began establishing grass roots support for revolutionary groups in Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan and in particular Algeria. Although partially divided by specific religious doctrine, newly arrived fundamentalists in London promoted a generic anti-western political ideology. Regardless of what school of Islamic law they subscribed to, each of these preachers encouraged followers to adopt extreme political narratives and pursue activities designed to support the global fundamentalist struggle. From this organisation of Islamic fundamentalist Muslims that began in the mid-1990s, domestic extremist terrorism in the UK would later emerge.

Politics Associated with Islamic Fundamentalism

In order to gain an insight into the mindset of British Muslims who pursue terrorism, an appreciation is required of the underlying political ideology guiding their activities. Drawing on a detailed archive of literature published by two fundamentalist groups towards the late 1990s, this third chapter details five core tenets constituted by twenty unique political narratives. Fundamentalist Muslims who adhere to, promulgate and act upon this ideology are aggressively anti-western. Almost universally, they contend that there is a global conspiracy driven by the US, UK and Israel to suppress the rise of Islam and prevent the organisation of fundamentalist Muslims. Discussing the motivation behind domestic terrorism in the UK, writers consistently point to British Foreign Policy. Suicide Bombing is deemed reactionary, a response to Western interference in Middle Eastern countries, support for Israel and the general oppression of Muslim worldwide. Key events like the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the battle of Fallujah and human rights abuses in Abu Ghraib aggravate religious tensions and cause widespread anger amongst even moderate Muslims. However, this reductionist approach fails to adequately capture the importance of environment as an agent of radicalisation. While the events in Iraq certainly angered the majority of British Muslims, only *extreme fundamentalists* held the necessary mindset to pursue terrorism.

Preachers consistently reminded followers of Allah's command to live in an Islamic state governed by Shariah. Consequently, achieving this objective was and continues to be the primary goal of British fundamentalist Muslims. Until the fall of the Taliban in 2001, a number of British Muslims moved to Afghanistan to live and raise families under Shariah. Recent evidence of how well fundamentalists adopted this political goal? appears clear in respect of the Syrian civil war that began in 2010. Estimates suggest as many as five hundred British Muslims have joined the insurgent group ISIS since 2012 helping to establish a Caliphate ruled according to Shariah.⁷ In addition to political narratives hailing the importance of God's law, preachers also

⁷ T. Whitehead, 'Syria a game changer for UK terror threat, warns Home Office intelligence chief', *The Telegraph Online*, 3rd July 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/10157825/Syria-a-game-changer-for-UK-terror-threat-warns-Home-Office-intelligence-chief.html>, (accessed 1st March 2015)

taught followers about the history of Western aggression against Muslims and how Jews are the greatest enemy of Islam. Extremist preachers convinced fellow Muslims it is their duty to pursue Jihad in order to fight back against oppression and liberate historical Muslim lands, in particular, Palestine. The most controversial tenet of the fundamentalist political ideology concerns the legitimacy of terrorism and suicide bombing. The final section of Chapter 3 therefore looks at how fundamentalists seek to legitimize violence against civilians as part of their fight back against the west.

Activities carried out in pursuit of a caliphate

Directed by an extreme political ideology, fundamentalists in the UK undertake a series of tasks designed to help re-establish an Islamic Caliphate. This fourth chapter examines the process in detail looking in particular at how immersion and intensive participation contributes towards developing the mindset necessary to volunteer for suicide terrorism. Beginning with recruitment of new followers, the first section charts the various locations where preachers have encouraged moderate Muslims to adopt fundamentalism. Due to an increase in counter terrorism initiatives, recruitment has become far less overt in recent years. Suspicious of moderate Muslims whom they believe to have co-operated with Police, recruiters have moved away from the mosque instead utilising more closed environments including the Internet, gym, private homes and sports groups. At events like demonstrations and public lectures, fundamentalists invite Muslims showing an interest in extremist politics to join social circles where recruitment now predominantly takes place.

When British Muslims become involved in the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*, more experienced members indoctrinate them with its political ideology. Observers commonly refer to this activity as “radicalisation”. The distinctive importance of political ideology for drawing individuals into Islamic fundamentalism is recognised by the European Commission’s expert group on violent radicalisation:

Ideology appears to be a constant feature in the radicalisation process related to various forms of terrorism. Indoctrination constitutes a relevant factor in the radicalisation of a small but significant minority of persons dissatisfied with the socio-political context in which they live. This, in turn, contributes to

consolidating violent ideas and attitudes and eventually generates a sub-culture of violence.⁸

A 2007 report conducted by the New York Police department (NYPD) concludes that terrorism is the ultimate consequence of the radicalisation process. Senior NYPD analyst and author of a best selling book on *Al-Qaeda*, Mitch Silber, explains:

In the example of the homegrown threat, local residents or citizens gradually adopt an extremist religious/political ideology hostile to the West, which legitimizes terrorism as a tool to affect societal change. This ideology is fed and nurtured with a variety of extremist influences. Internalizing this extreme belief system as one's own is radicalization.⁹

Surprisingly, it is moderate preachers, not extremists, who lay the foundations needed to enable radicalisation amongst British Muslims. At the weekly Islamic service (Friday prayers), Imams constantly remind the gathered audience of moderate and fundamentalist Muslims about the suffering experienced on a daily basis by their co-religionists around the world. Rightly, moderate Imams call for the followers to provide aid and prayer rather than violent Jihad. These political sermons do not encourage Muslims to become fundamentalists, however, inevitably they lead the audience to reflect on what they are doing to help end the suffering of fellow Muslims.

Inevitably, a minority turn to fundamentalist groups who preach that Jihad is the only legitimate means in which to fight back against western aggression. This more focused type of radicalisation involves extremist preachers convincing new recruits they have a religious obligation to obey Sharia and thus defend co-religionists. The third type of preaching concerns targeted radicalisation. In this scenario, senior fundamentalist Muslims in the UK strongly encourage fellow Muslims to sacrifice their lives as suicide bombers in the fight against western occupation and oppression and more recently in defence of the Islamic State.

Supporting fundamentalist Muslims who wish to pursue Jihad, men with previous combat experience have commonly served as facilitators. Two important

⁸ European Commission 'Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism'

⁹ M. Silber and A. Bhatt, 'Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat', NYPD, 2007, http://www.nypdshield.org/public/SiteFiles/documents/NYPD_Report-Radicalization_in_the_West.pdf (accessed 15th September 2014)

theatres of conflict are significant in this respect. Firstly, and in particular for the UK, facilitators who have fought in Kashmir provide introductions to second-generation family members. In terrorist discourse, writers often refer to this practice as having an “uncle in Kashmir”. Even before Islamic fundamentalism took hold in the UK, British Muslims were joining Kashmiri insurgent groups like Pakistani backed Lashkar-e-Taiba in order to wage Jihad. Secondly, British Muslims who fought the Soviets alongside the mujahedeen during the 1980s have also served as important facilitators. Active in the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* for decades, these men use well-established connections to their former comrades in order to enable typically young British Muslims the opportunity to undertake military training in Afghanistan.

Facilitation is an important activity recognised and targeted extensively by counter terrorism officers since 2005. Policy makers believe that without networks connecting Muslim communities in the UK to Pakistan, potential terrorists cannot gain access to training necessary to build explosive devices for suicide bombing. The rise of “self-starters” combined with the growing availability of Internet based explosives training renders this strategy increasingly ineffectual. For example, in 2008 British Muslim convert Nicky Reilly, attempted a suicide mission utilising a homemade explosive device without having received any training. In practical terms, facilitation can range from financing a covert trip to Pakistan, to providing the introduction necessary for a British Muslim to undertake military training with an overseas insurgent group.

The majority of British Muslims who train for Jihad consider it a religious obligation. Whether or not they actually engage in combat, fundamentalist Muslims believe in the need to be prepared. Consequently, only a minority of those who train for Jihad actually travel on to locations such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan and more recently Syria. The majority simply return home to the UK and get on with their lives. In the final section of Chapter 4, attention turns to the important activity of financing and equipping foreign mujahedeen striving to establish the caliphate. Evidence suggests that British Muslims convicted of major terrorism offences have previously raised funds and sent equipment to Afghanistan. Participation in this activity helped build the necessary connections that would later enable a minority to gain explosives training, authorisation and operational support to pursue violent terrorist acts.

Terrorism born from Islamic Fundamentalism

Chapters two to four examine in depth the inner workings of the UK *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. Individually and collectively, these chapters present a detailed study of how fundamentalists organised in the late 1990s by promoting extreme political narratives and engaging in activities designed to re-establish the Islamic Caliphate. In chapter five, the focus shifts directly towards the product of this environment, namely the pursuit of terrorism by British Muslims. Primarily this fifth chapter seeks to understand the motivation behind fundamentalists who cross the line and become terrorists, how they operate and lastly what distinguishes them from the majority of fundamentalists satisfied with mere political activism. The chapter begins by presenting ten case studies in which individuals convicted of serious terrorism offences have engaged in fundamentalist politics and activities. Through involvement in the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*, members were sensitive to how the west would react to 9/11.

In December 2001, the “shoe bomber”, Richard Reid, failed in his attempt to detonate explosives hidden inside his trainers while aboard a flight from Paris to Miami. In the immediate years before their recruitment by Al-Qaeda, both Reid and his fellow conspirator Sajid Badat attended sermons given by radical cleric Abu Hamza Al-Masri at Finsbury Park Mosque. Like many of their peers, Al-Masri encouraged both men to believe that America was at war with Islam and that Washington had used 9/11 as an excuse to eradicate the Taliban, the only regime governing according to God’s law. Committed fundamentalists, Reid and Badat supported by UK facilitators pursued jihad against US forces in Afghanistan. However, according to Badat, during basic military training in 2001, operatives from Al-Qaeda convinced both him and Reid they could best serve the global fundamentalist cause by undertaking a suicide mission against the US. Described as a “top down” approach to recruiting suicide bombers, this form of radicalisation continued in the UK until at least the *liquid bomb plot* at High Wycombe foiled by counter terrorism officers in August 2006.

Significantly degraded and debilitated by the *War on Terror*, the importance of Al-Qaeda in relation to terrorism carried out by British Muslims declined post 2007. The strongest explanation for this decline is the overwhelming success of American drone strikes in North Waziristan. Targeted assassination of key facilitators

in Pakistan and increased disruption of UK facilitators caused fundamentalist Muslims to pursue terrorism almost entirely alone. The only support available to British Muslims since 2007 has been and continues to be that offered by fellow members of the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. Following our examination of roughly sixty extreme fundamentalist terrorists involved in ten major terrorist conspiracies at the start of chapter five, an attempt is made to profile these individuals and in doing so challenge the common orthodoxy that suggests they are void of any humanity. Contrary to popular opinion, men who sacrifice their lives for what they believe in are rarely aggressive in their everyday life and unlikely to be suffering from mental illness. Interviews conducted by the researcher with counter radicalisation workers paint a picture of strongly empathic individuals with a history of engaging in positive action to support their community. This is certainly true of Mohammed Sidique Khan, ringleader of the July 7th London bombers. In addition to serving as a community leader and primary school teaching assistant, Khan was active in a group known to assist in the rehabilitation of drug users.

Since it first emerged in the late 1990's, hundreds of British Muslims have engaged with the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. Only a small minority have later pursued terrorism. In section three of chapter five, the researcher seeks to understand what motivates a fundamentalist to cross the line and volunteer to become a terrorist. Critically, the author asks to what extent is British foreign policy a primary factor and secondly can it be argued that many of those who pursue terrorism are at least initially, reluctant volunteers coerced into participating by more committed members of the cell? It is plausible that British Muslims who embraced Islamic fundamentalism with good intentions inadvertently engaged in conspiracies for which they were less than enthusiastic. The penultimate section of the fifth and final chapter examines in detail the operational cycle of domestic terrorist plots in the UK. In particular, focus turns importantly to the role played by the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* as a facilitator, organiser and general source of support to British Muslims pursuing terrorism.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

In concluding this comprehensive dissertation, attention turns to the British government and how policy makers have responded to Islamic fundamentalism as an

agent of radicalisation. Findings suggest that recognition of the relationship between fundamentalism and terrorism did not occur in Whitehall until shortly after the London bombings in 2005.¹⁰ Consecutive British governments have long failed to appreciate how the mindset necessary to pursue terrorism takes several years to incubate and requires an environment conducive to violence. In light of the killing of soldier Lee Rigby in May 2013, Prime Minister David Cameron set up a task force in order to find new ways in which to disrupt the Islamic fundamentalist movement. In considering the government response, this dissertation examines legislation designed to limit activities conducted by members of the fundamentalist movement, policy initiatives aimed at countering radicalisation within the Muslim community as well as practical steps taken by front line services including attempts to shut down the facilitation networks. In completing the dissertation, this author presents a series of policy recommendations, which seek to build upon the existing counter terrorism framework in order to challenge the role of Islamic fundamentalism as an incubator of extremist terrorism. In particular, ministers are strongly encouraged to re-introduce and expand upon the use of control orders. Firstly as a means in which disrupt the organisation of fundamentalist Muslims and secondly to coerce those on the periphery of counter terrorism investigations, to undertake government approved de-radicalisation programmes. Only by having their extremist ideology challenged by more learned Islamic scholars, will individuals at risk of pursuing terrorism, reconsider the legitimacy of such actions.

¹⁰ J. Klausen, 'British Counter-Terrorism After 7/7: Adapting Community Policing to the Fight Against Domestic Terrorism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2009, pp. 403-420

Literature Review

This chapter outlines the competing theories that seek to explain why British Muslims commit acts of violent terrorism, typically killing themselves and innocent civilians in the process. When scholars first began studying the phenomenon in the 1980s, they posited a remarkable range of motivations. Researchers argued that volunteers gained motivation from either religious fanaticism, a desire for revenge against occupation, competition with other groups, brainwashing or some form of irrational behaviour linked to mental deficiency. Israeli Professor Ariel Merari holds a wide experience of studying Palestinian suicide bombers. Drawing on his considerable knowledge, Merari readily acknowledges that, ‘in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the conclusion that suicide bombers are just ordinary, normal people seems tentatively reasonable’.¹ The inference from this conclusion is that any suggestion the July 7th 2005 London bombers were in any way suffering from mental illness, holds little weight. On the contrary, Mohammed Sidique Khan (MSK) was arguably a normal, hardworking father who served his family and his community well. A seemingly empathetic figure, his decision to carry out terrorism is therefore inherently difficult to explain.

There is no public evidence to suggest any of the British Muslims who engaged in terrorism were suffering from any form of brainwashing. Consistent with his fellow conspirators, Mohammed Sidique Khan believed he was a soldier of God fighting against an aggressive neo-colonialist western empire at war with Islam. On the surface these men appear to have been motivated entirely by their political beliefs. British Muslims who commit acts of terrorism defy any kind of sociological profiling. According to a report by the British Security Service (MI5), ‘several hundred individuals known to be involved in, or closely associated with, violent extremist activity do not fit a single demographic profile, they are a diverse collection of

¹ A. Merari et al, ‘Personality Characteristics of Self Martyrs/Suicide Bombers and Organizers of Suicide Attacks’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2010, pp. 87–101; A. Merari et al, ‘Making Palestinian Martyrdom Operations/Suicide Attacks: Interviews with Would-Be Perpetrators and Organizers’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2010, pp. 102–119; A. Merari, *Driven to Death*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010

individuals who do not follow a typical pathway to violent extremism'.² This assessment from MI5 implies that British Muslims who pursue terrorism represent a wide spectrum of individuals from within society. However, this dissertation argues that only a specific subset are involved, specifically those who have engaged to varying degrees with Islamic fundamentalism.

Moreover, researchers can better understand violent terrorism when observed in relation to a conflict zone than it is in countries enjoying relative peace and security. Muslims who execute journalists, bomb aid convoys and drive explosive laden trucks into crowds of women and children have typically already experienced death and destruction first hand. The British Muslim known as 'Jihadi John' had spent at least six months fighting on behalf of the Islamic State (IS) before executing three western hostages. Violence often has to become normalised amongst terrorists before they are willing to undertake it themselves. Certainly, in almost every major UK terrorist plot from 2003 to 2014, at least one member of the cell (typically the leader) fought on the front line with a foreign insurgent group: Afghanistan, Somalia and Kashmir being the most common destinations. Fighting is both practical and ideological. Jihadists learn not only how to kill the enemy, but also how to dehumanise them. In turn, this allows a minority to commit terrorism against civilians whom they no longer perceive as fellow citizens but rather as enemies of Islam.

However, this presents us with an intriguing puzzle. Palestinians are born and raised under occupation. Reflecting on the mindset of someone living amongst the rubble of a bombed out neighbourhood, who throws stones and petrol bombs at passing military convoys and regularly attends funerals of friends and family, one can appreciate a desire to retaliate. British Muslims who have conspired to commit terrorism have no direct experience of the trauma encountered by individuals living in either Gaza or the West Bank. Reflecting on the roughly sixty fundamentalists who have engaged in major terrorist plots, all enjoyed the benefits of growing up in a modern, secular, generally tolerant, multicultural society. University education and professional employment being common factors amongst them; certainly, this is true of cell leaders. If British Muslims who pursue terrorism have little in common with

² A. Travis, 'MI5 report challenges views on terrorism in Britain Exclusive: Sophisticated analysis says there is no single pathway to violent extremism', *The Guardian Online*, 21st August 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurity.terrorism1>, (accessed 18th Sep 2014)

their foreign counterparts, how can we account for their seemingly irrational behaviour? In particular, why did London suicide bomber Mohammed Sidique Khan abandon his responsibilities as a father and husband in order to kill innocent civilians taking his own life in the process?

Defining Terrorism

Legislation introduced as part of the 1999 UK/Northern Ireland *Good Friday Agreement*, formally defined terrorism as, ‘the threat or actual use of an action designed to influence government for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause’.³ Since the objective of any insurgency is to effect regime change, the historical dichotomy between terrorists and freedom fighters collapsed under the weight of this new legislation. Since 2000, UK citizens can no longer without risk of prosecution, support any kind of political violence either at home or overseas. A range of non-violent acts including fund-raising, training and exhorting fellow radicals to act now constitute terrorist offences. Troubling contradictions between anti-terrorism laws and UK foreign policy became acutely obvious when the *Arab Spring* instigated regime change across the Middle East. Notwithstanding the British government’s desire to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, upon returning to the UK, British Muslims suspected of fighting on behalf of Syrian rebels routinely face arrest and prosecution.⁴ Politicians have expressed concerns that once back in the UK, these trained jihadists might cross the line and commit acts of terrorism.⁵

Accordingly, a detailed consideration of the academic discourse surrounding suicide terrorism is required. In particular, the extent to which mainstream theories assist us in accounting for the contemporary British experience. Broadly speaking, the

³ Terrorism Act 2000, London, HMSO, c.1, s1 (1)(b)(c)

⁴ S. Malik, ‘Britons arrested at Heathrow suspected of supporting terrorism in Syria’ *The Guardian Online*, 10 October 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/oct/10/britons-arrested-heathrow-suspicion-syria>, (accessed 18th September 2014)

⁵ A. Gricie, ‘Isis terror threat: Cameron considers ban on UK fighters in Syria and Iraq returning home’, *The Independent Online*, 31st August 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-jihadists-cameron-considers-ban-on-uk-fighters-in-syria-and-iraq-returning-home-9702108.html> (accessed 18th September 2014)

current literature leaves something to be desired. In a 2007 review essay, Martha Crenshaw, a professor at Stanford University and the doyen of terrorism studies, outlined a set of competing theories drawn from thirteen books published on the subject since 2002.⁶ Highly critical of the absence of a consistent ontology, epistemology and methodology, Crenshaw notes the imprecise nature of the concept, the absence of established facts and the failure to sufficiently distinguish between suicide and non-suicide terrorism. Incompatibility between datasets, ambiguous definitions and references to cases that conveniently fit the author's stated classification, largely suggest the field is in its infancy. Crenshaw persuasively argues that the inclusion or exclusion of specific events can strongly bias the findings of a given study, thus influencing the overall validity and reliability of any conclusions. For example, the Japanese Kamikaze fit the profile of suicide bombers, but they were soldiers not terrorists. Throughout the first Persian Gulf War 1980 to 1988, waves of Iranian children (*Basij*) clothed in white shrouds traumatised Iraqi soldiers by running blindly across minefields. Again, the Iranian state directed these 'volunteers' during wartime and therefore they do not attract the terrorist label. Intensely problematic, a universal theory of suicide terrorism is difficult to achieve due to the irreconcilability of the widely varying contexts, objectives, legitimacy and motivations associated with competing actors.

By replacing the word *terrorism* with the word *mission*, an approach taken by Diego Gambetta, it is certainly possible to combine heterogeneous groups more reliably and to escape the labyrinthine debate around the word 'terrorism'.⁷ Liberated from the linguistic straightjacket imposed by the subjectivity of the word 'terrorism', authors are gifted a much broader dataset in which to pursue quantitative analysis based upon an investigation of *suicide missions*. Researchers may ignore the nature of the conflict, the legitimacy of volunteers as well as the overall strategic objectives. Instead, focusing specifically on why individuals agree to sacrifice their lives in pursuit of a specific political or military outcome. On the surface, this approach appears somewhat attractive. However, such a broad definition brings in such a wide range of variables that it makes it almost impossible to draw definitive conclusions.

⁶ M. Crenshaw, 'Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay', *Security Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2007, p. 134

⁷ D. Gambetta et al, *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005

For example, how does one differentiate between the motivations of terrorist groups, and countries that employ terrorism within an existential conflict? By contrast, Professor Robert Pape and Dr Mia Bloom refer explicitly to *suicide terrorism*.⁸ The only incidents considered by these two authors are those in which the perpetrator has been designated a terrorist by the US government. One may immediately appreciate the inherent flaw within this approach; it relies on an individual or government's subjective definition of who warrants the terrorist label. Let us suggest hypothetically that one researcher is Jewish and another Arab. In collecting data, the former gathers data from the *Jerusalem Post* while the latter relies on articles in the *Palestinian Chronicle*. The two authors would have two irreconcilable datasets and therefore any conclusions drawn from their studies would be entirely subjective. Indeed, one could encounter this problem simply by taking two conflicting definitions of terrorism offered by different departments within the US government.

Consistent with Gambetta, Anne Oliver and Paul Steinberg who have studied the culture of support behind Palestinian group Hamas, avoid the word terrorism entirely. Instead, they refer to *murder-suicides*.⁹ Although this term may be welcome in Israel by hawkish politicians and senior commanders of the Israeli Defence Force, Hamas themselves would almost certainly reject it. Palestinians who volunteer for a martyrdom mission do not perceive themselves as committing suicide and certainly not murder. Every *sacred explosion* (colloquial term) carried out against their technologically superior enemy is a military operation no different to an Israeli targeted assassination. Although Oliver and Steinberg's definition may not be the most appropriate, their avoidance of the word terrorism deserves respect. Arguably, it should not matter whether a group is classified as terrorist or insurgent; the process of arming and deploying a *human bomb* remains the same. However, this does not suggest we should conflate a mixture of state and non-state actors. Only that it is acceptable to combine non-state actors regardless of whether they are labelled as terrorists or insurgents by the west. For example, the Turkish PKK, Hamas, the IRA

⁸ R. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, New York, Random House, 2005; M. Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005

⁹ A. Oliver and P. Steinberg, *The Road to Martyrs' Square: A journey into the world of the Suicide Bomber*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005

and the Tamil Tigers could all be homogenised in a single dataset regardless of international disagreement over their designation.

If word play were not enough to make the study of suicide terrorism sufficiently complex, semantic disputes over the probability of death (certain or just highly likely), classification of target (civilian or military), and weapon used (explosive vest or small arms), further complicate comparative analysis and make irreconcilable the competing theories and policy recommendations.¹⁰ In pursuing a general explanation for suicide terrorism, authors typically combine volunteers and groups as homogenous units. This is necessary to allow quantitative analysis and is the preferred methodological approach for serious academics in the United States. Pape and Bloom both attempt to present a single holistic theory by adopting this approach. In contrast, Gambetta and Ricolfi, two European academics with greater emphasis on qualitative research methods, reject the possibility of a single explanation for the complex universe of suicide terrorism.¹¹

The structure of Crenshaw's observations suggests that research into suicide terrorism can be appropriately divided into a three-tier framework. Firstly, at the personal or individual level, analysis focuses on what motivates an individual to sacrifice their life in order to end the lives of others. Leading authors on the psychology of suicide bombers include Ariel Merari and Marc Sageman. The former makes the case that 'volunteers' find it hard to say no to an authority figure, thereby making them susceptible to recruitment.¹² Meanwhile a study of 400 members of Al-Qaeda by Sageman found an absence of any antisocial behaviour, mental illness, early social trauma or behavioural disorders such as rage, paranoia and narcissism amongst potential volunteers.¹³ Secondly, at the organisational level, authors ask why some but not all terrorist groups direct suicide terrorism and what they expect to achieve from doing so. The principal authors at this level include Robert Pape and Mia Bloom, who focus on foreign occupation and competition between rival terrorist groups

¹⁰ Crenshaw *Explaining Suicide Terrorism* p.135

¹¹ Gambetta *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* p.259

¹² Merari 'Personality Characteristics of Self Martyrs/Suicide Bombers and Organizers of Suicide Attacks' p.106

¹³ M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania University Press, 2004

respectively.¹⁴ Finally, at the social level, interest concerns the degree to which particular societies support and engender suicide bombing despite the certainty of harsh retaliatory action. Few authors focus specifically on social support and therefore literature typically consists of short chapters in books centred on individuals or organisational groups.¹⁵

Some respected theories of suicide terrorism typically explain the phenomenon by referring to the interplay between the individual, group and the host community.¹⁶ For example, a society under occupation may construct a mythology of self-sacrifice to expel a foreign invader. Seeking to garner support and recognition amongst the community, resistance groups capitalise on this socially constructed 'cult of martyrdom' by offering the means to fulfil personal ambitions of self-sacrifice. This holistic description can be recognised in conservative areas of Palestine, including Nablus and Jenin, where a significant number of martyrs originated during the second intifada.¹⁷ In the old town area of the city of Nablus, posters of martyrs adorn every wall and the people speak openly of their pride for those who have carried out suicide missions against the Israelis. Within the context of terrorism carried out by British Muslims; although there is no local host community, suicide bombers claim to be acting on behalf of the global Muslim community (Umma).

Even the most cursory examination of available literature suggests a clear dichotomy between old and new terrorism. *Modern terrorism* refers to campaigns waged since the early 1980's by specific groups in defined locations for explicit purposes. Examples include the PPK in Turkey, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. In contrast, *postmodern terrorism* is detached from a specific community, a recognised terrorist organisation and a set of achievable political objectives. From the British perspective, this new wave began in 2003 with the plot codenamed by Police as *Operation Crevise*. Available evidence

¹⁴ Pape 'Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism'; Bloom 'Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror'

¹⁵ M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers*, Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006; A. Pedahzur, *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalisation of Martyrdom*, London & New York, Routledge, 2006

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Ricolfi 'Palestinians, 1981-2003'

suggests 21st century terrorists are mostly inexperienced and typically have little more than an ideological alignment with international groups like Al-Qaeda. Commonly they are self-funded, trained in northern regions of Pakistan and motivated by perceived Western aggression against co-religionists. Despite the amateurish, self-start up nature of *post-modern* terrorists, they have arguably achieved significant operations in London, Edinburgh, Madrid and most recently Stockholm. While modern theories might with a gymnastic like stretch, explain the *post-modern* wave (for example religion), empirical evidence suggests that this involves painful contortion and arguments that are far from elegant. What academia and policy makers need is a clear separation between the modern and the post-modern, the rational and the seemingly irrational. This chapter seek to focus on this challenge and proceeds by examining five mainstream theories that seek to explain what motivated the four British Fundamentalist Muslims responsible for the July 7th 2005 London Suicide Bombings.

Explanations for Suicide Terrorism

The remainder of this chapter systematically examines five mainstream theories that seek to account for the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. For each theory, we consider how well it fits as an explanation for the British experience of suicide terrorism that began in 2003. The first theory considers the concept of top down radicalisation, attempts by experienced terrorists to convince fundamentalist Muslims in the UK to volunteer for suicide bombing.

Manipulation by radicalising agents

Research fellow Kris Christmann suggests that ‘radicalising agents and extremist messages’ influence vulnerable young British Muslims towards terrorism.¹⁸ In other words, British Muslim men from Leeds, Luton, Birmingham, and London who engaged in acts of terrorism over the last ten years were radicalised by *extremists*.

¹⁸ K. Christman, 2012, ‘Preventing Religious Radicalisation and Violent Extremism A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence’, *Youth Justice Board*, <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/research-and-analysis/yjb/preventing-violent-extremism-systematic-review.pdf>, (accessed 18th Sep 2014)

Consequently, this dissertation is primarily concerned with the social environment in which British Muslims inhabit before volunteering to pursue terrorism. In particular, we are interested in how they are encouraged to adopt a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Those who chose this path internalise extreme political narratives and engage in activities that may eventually lead them towards terrorism. Drawing upon a 2009 study of major UK terror plots, Bromund and Roach connect at least 61 of the 87 cell members to Al-Qaeda thereby highlighting the importance of top down radicalisation.¹⁹ In response, since 2005, the British government has engaged in a hearts and minds campaign to turn the Muslim community away from fundamentalism towards moderation. Acting in parallel, a long-term counter-terrorism programme managed by the Office of Security and Counter-terrorism in the Home Office known as PREVENT, aims to protect vulnerable Muslims from the threat posed by radicalising agents.

The PREVENT strand of the UK's overarching counter-terrorism strategy known as CONTEST has been widely criticised, some might even say subjected to a degree of derision. Speaking to the BBC in 2014, a senior figure in the Muslim Council of Great Britain denounced the programme, claiming that it was having a 'negative impact'.²⁰ Harun Khan has said that PREVENT had 'entirely failed' the Muslim community and served only to push Muslims towards radical groups thereby achieving the exact opposite of what it was designed to do. In an earlier rebuttal of this 'protective' style approach, anthropologist Scott Atran argues 'there are no Al-Qaeda cells in Europe and no radicalising agents brain washing young Muslim men into pursuing acts of terrorism'.²¹ Muslims in the West are self-radicalising and seek out finance and training rather than have it pushed on them by foreign groups.²² Political sociologist and former CIA operative Marc Sageman, also believes the

¹⁹ T. Bromund and M. Roach, 'Islamist Terrorist Plots in Great Britain: Uncovering the Global Network', *Backgrounders*, No. 2329, Oct 2009

²⁰ Staff Reporter, 'Muslim Council says Prevent anti-terror scheme has failed', *BBC News Online*, 26th August 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28934992>, (accessed 18th September 2014)

²¹ S. Atran, 'The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2006, pp. 127-147

²² *Ibid.*

greatest danger comes not from Al-Qaeda, but from Westernised Muslims undergoing the process of radicalisation far from the tribal regions of Pakistan.²³

Research fellow at the RAND Corporation, Aiden Kirby, argues social dynamics infused with radical Islamic ideology and rhetoric largely drive the self-starter phenomenon.²⁴ The evidence reviewed by this doctoral study seem to confirm the findings of Kirby, strongly postulating that social networks play a necessary role in uniting potential terrorists. However, Kirby incorrectly claims the London bombers were an autonomous clique whose operation occurred in the absence of any organised network or formal entry into the Jihad. Firstly, this proposition fails to capture the known connection between UK terror cells originating from the organisation of Islamic fundamentalists since the late 1990s. Secondly, in almost every major UK terrorist plot, at least one or more cell members pursued jihad overseas before volunteering to commit terrorism. Rejecting Kirby's findings, this study has instead determined an affiliate of Al-Qaeda initially recruited the London bombers. Subsequently they received explosives training by an operative before returning to the UK with orders to carry out a suicide mission 'on behalf of the brothers'.²⁵ By arguing the London bombers operated autonomously, Kirby ignores the necessary role played by fellow members of the Islamic fundamentalist movement in both the UK and overseas. Danish researchers Crone and Harrow also reject Kirby's explanation and highlight the importance of radicalizing agents. In a 2011 quantitative study of *Islamist terrorism* in the West, both scholars conclude that although most UK terrorists plots are internally driven, they are not however entirely autonomous.²⁶

Limitations in the research conducted by Kirby may be accounted for by the absence of two important primary sources from his study. Firstly, he does not refer to court transcripts relating to three men who are accused of supporting the London bombers. In testimony given by defendant Wahid Ali, he openly - and at great cost to

²³ M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008

²⁴ A. Kirby, 'The London Bombers as Self-Starters: A Case Study in Indigenous Radicalization and the Emergence of Autonomous Cliques', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 30, no. 5, 2007, pp. 415-428

²⁵ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) et al [2009] EWCA Crim 2396. 223.

²⁶ M. Crone and M. Harrow, 'Homegrown Terrorism in the West', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2011, pp. 521-536

his defence - confessed to attending a 2004 training camp with Mohammed Sidique Khan in Pakistan. Ali told the court that when Khan returned early January 2005, he had agreed to 'do something for the brothers back in the UK'.²⁷ Secondly, diaries written by Al-Qaeda associate *Rashid Rauf* and recovered in Germany in 2009, discuss in detail how Al-Qaeda operative Abu Ubaida Al-Masri trained the London bombers. In the diary, Rauf also discusses the failed July 21st 2005 cell and how they failed to maintain contact with handlers back in Pakistan. Reviewing this primary material, we cannot accept Kirby's conclusions that the London bombers were in any way autonomous.

Significantly, Kirby offers tacit acknowledgement of the importance that environment plays as an incubator of terrorism. He notes the well-established and well-documented culture of *Islamic radicalism* present in the United Kingdom as early as the mid-1990s. This study has established that Islamic fundamentalism first began attracting followers in 1995 when Palestinian preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed established the now outlawed Salafi jihadist group known as Al-Muhajiroon (ALM). Working in parallel to draw British Muslims into fundamentalism, Jordanian cleric Abu Qatada also gave regular sermons in which he encouraged followers to pursue Jihad in Afghanistan. As momentum gathered due to the British government's failure to offer any kind of challenge, Bakri and Qatada were later joined by Egyptian self-labelled Muslim cleric Abu Hamza Al-Masri. Together, these men rapidly disseminated Islamic fundamentalism across Muslims communities in the UK.

Widely published scholar Farhad Khosrokhaver has extensively interviewed men convicted of being involved in Al-Qaeda. This important research has discovered that suicide bombers relate to the concept of martyrdom in fundamentalist Islam. For many, a devout interpretation of their faith offers a profound way of channelling anger and rejection of western nations that many believe are guilty of oppressing Muslims worldwide. Fundamentalists who have organised themselves into a socio-political movement since the late 1990s, strongly promote narratives in which the west is accused of being at war with Islam. Followers reject western ideas of democracy and human rights and are constantly reminded of their obligation to protect co-religionists by means of jihad.

²⁷ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) et al [2009]

After the events of July 7th 2005, the British government introduced a new counter terrorism strategy known as CONTEST. An examination of Muslims communities in late 2005 raised concerns about their isolation from the rest of society amid public fears of radicalization and the fostering of terrorism within this environment. These uncertainties were compounded by a number of domestically generated acts of extremism, notably the High Wycombe plot to detonate liquid explosives aboard passenger aircraft in 2006. The stipulated rationale of government policy is to stop members of the Muslim community in Great Britain from becoming radicalized to such an extent that they either commit or at least support acts of terrorism. In a word, *de-radicalisation* has become the focus of policy. The post 2007 paradigm shift in counter terrorism strategy, presents tangible evidence that government recognized the importance of challenging the wider environment from which Islamic terrorism has emerged. Yet in 2014, Maajid Nawaz, leader of an anti-extremism think tank claimed that despite government rhetoric, there was still no satisfactory strategy to challenge non-violent extremism and the environment from which potential future terrorists continue to operate unchallenged.²⁸

Religion

British Muslims who conspired to commit terrorism between 2003 and 2014 adhered to a fundamentalist interpretation of their faith. More generally, author and philosopher Sam Harris argues ‘the mainstream doctrine of Islam contains this notion of jihad to kill infidels. Anyone who does not accept this claim has either not read the Koran or is simply lying’.²⁹ Rejecting competing explanations for suicide terrorism, Harris argues the world is full of poor, uneducated, exploited, and oppressed peoples who do not commit the acts of terrorism that have according to him, become commonplace amongst Muslims.³⁰ Such a broad generalisation fails to take into

²⁸ M. Nawaz, ‘We are woefully unprepared for when our terrorists come home’, *The Times Online*, 21st August 2014, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article4182553.ece>, (accessed 18th September 2014)

²⁹ S. Harris, ‘Lecture to the New York Society of Ethical Culture’, [online video], 2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOpXHtHPZmU>, 03:50, (accessed 18th September 2014)

³⁰ S. Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*, London, Free Press, 2005, p. 108

account the substantial campaign of suicide bombing carried out by oppressed secular Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka. Until their defeat in 2009, the Tigers consistently deployed operatives on suicide missions against both military and civilian targets. Rejecting any suggestion that Islam has been unfairly ‘hijacked’ by terrorists, Harris vehemently attacks the entire Muslim faith. Provocatively, he claims, ‘it is not merely that we are at war with an otherwise peaceful religion that has been hijacked by extremists, we are at war with precisely the vision of life that is prescribed to all Muslims in the Quran’.³¹ Mainstream British politicians do not support this proposition. They consistently point out that the majority of the Muslim community in the UK neither engage nor support any interpretation of Islam that advocates violence in any form, let alone against innocent civilians.

The author of a number of important books on the subject of reason versus religion, Harris contends that Islamic doctrine sufficiently accounts for the 2005 London bombings. For Harris, much of the Muslim world has rationalised suicide attacks, which they refer to as ‘sacred explosions’.³² Within this normalised ‘cult of martyrdom’, volunteers believe that upon detonation, they ascend to paradise where space has been reserved for them and their family. Like Harris, Nasra Hassan also focuses on religion, paradise, and divine rewards sought after by volunteers for suicide terrorism. Hassan agrees with Harris that volunteers intercede on behalf of their loved ones so they too can be saved from hell.³³ British Muslims who pursue terrorism believe that rewards in the heavenly afterlife are plentiful and far greater than any tangible benefit offered on earth. Addressing the British public in a martyrdom video recorded before the July 7th London bombings, Mohammed Sidique Khan strongly implies that he is motivated by the prospect of entering paradise which is far more important than anything on earth. Specifically he says, ‘our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer’.³⁴

³¹ *Ibid*, p.109

³² *Ibid*, p.123

³³ N. Hassan, Nasra, ‘Letter from Gaza: An Arsenal of Believers’, *The New Yorker*, 19 November 2001, http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/7011119fa_FACTI, (accessed 10 April 2002)

³⁴ Staff Reporter, ‘London Bomber: Text in Full’, *BBC News Online*, 1st September 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm>, (accessed 18th September 2014)

In terms of educational attainment, British Muslim terrorists range from the complete illiterate all the way up to degree level.³⁵ In Pakistani culture, marriage and a stable family are highly regarded with low levels of divorce. Consequently, few British Muslims who pursue terrorism can claim to have been negatively influenced by a troubled upbringing or family breakdown. The majority were either middle class or better. Harris subsequently asks ‘how many engineers or doctors need to fly planes into buildings for us to appreciate that it is not poverty or lack of education that motivates suicide bombers?’³⁶ For Harris, religion, specifically Islam and adoption of fundamentalist political ideology lay at the heart of suicide terrorism pursued by British Muslims.

French Sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar offers the concept of ‘martyropath’ whereby, ‘the goal is no longer to realize an ideal, but to take leave of life by destroying the enemy in an apocalyptic vision that will put an end to life’.³⁷ According to Khosrokhavar, suicide bombers are entirely of the Islamic faith because unlike other religions, Islam ‘does not avoid the question of legitimate violence, it resorts to violence when justice requires it to do so’.³⁸ Harris reinforces this idea by suggesting that although one could potentially develop a doctrine of martyrdom from Buddhism; it is incredibly difficult compared to Islam, where it is much more straightforward.³⁹ In seeking to isolate Islam as an inherently violent religion and therefore present it as a single holistic explanation for suicide terrorism, Harris compares Muslim terrorists to Chinese and Israeli political prisoners. Dissidents and political opponents that have spent years in Chinese prisons suffering the most brutal torture leave prison and make statements like, ‘my greatest fear when I was in prison was that I would lose my sense of compassion for my torturers’.⁴⁰ In contrast, Harris argues that due to what Muslims believe according to Islam, one will never find a

³⁵ Travis ‘MI5 report challenges views on terrorism in Britain Exclusive: Sophisticated analysis says there is no single pathway to violent extremism’

³⁶ Harris ‘Lecture to the New York Society of Ethical Culture’ 04:00

³⁷ F. Khosrokhavar, ‘Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs, translated from the French by David Macey’, London, Pluto Press, 2005, p. 60

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.214

³⁹ S. Harris, ‘Beyond Belief Conference’, [online video], 2006b, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wu6qQDphSGU>, 1:05, (accessed 18th September 2014)

⁴⁰ Harris, ‘Lecture to the New York Society of Ethical Culture’ 04:00

Muslim terrorist coming out of prison who will speak in similar terms to the Tibetans.⁴¹

The absence of suicide terrorism amongst followers of other religions may stem from the absence of justification by their leaders. If the Pope in his weekly address told the world's Catholics they were obliged to pursue martyrdom against anyone burning Churches in Nigeria, then at least a minority would carry out his instructions. Catholics in Africa are willing to die from Aids because Pope Benedict the XVI objects to contraception. If eulogised by the Catholic Church, would they not be equally enthusiastic to commit suicide in pursuit of religious martyrdom? Yusuf Qaradawi, the world's most influential Muslim spokesman and writer, and Sheikh Tantawi who heads the world's most prestigious centre of Islamic learning at Egypt's Al Azhar University, both support and justify the use of suicide missions against Israeli civilians. Whether or not religion alone explains suicide terrorism, it is impossible to ignore the consistent claims by volunteers that they act on behalf of co-religionists. In the absence of Islam, there would be no global Muslim Umma and therefore no virtual kinship to inspire individuals thousands of miles from a conflict zone to give their lives altruistically. British Muslims who pursue terrorism constantly refer to the humiliation suffered by co-religionists. Whether or not they feel compelled to act by religious doctrine, one cannot discount the power of religion as a mobilising agent, drawing young British Muslims into an environment from which acts of terrorism may ultimately emerge.

However, Crenshaw points out that other than Israeli and Shay, all other authors she has reviewed reject the idea that religion alone is a necessary or sufficient cause for suicide terrorism.⁴² Pointing to Lebanon, Crenshaw notes that suicide attacks were not the exclusive province of the Islamic group Hezbollah and that secular political parties were equally engaged. Although religion alone may not be sufficient to encourage suicide terrorism, several authors agree that it has a role to play. In respect of 1980's Lebanon, Reuter has observed, 'Religion, patriotism, and the willingness to sacrifice oneself can easily blend together when the challenge is to

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 04:27

⁴² Crenshaw *Explaining Suicide Terrorism* p.149

resist a foreign occupier of a different faith'.⁴³ Pape contends that it is not religious doctrine *per se*, but religious difference between the occupier and the occupied that enables suicide terrorism. 'The taproot of suicide terrorism is nationalism, but it is inflamed by religious difference'.⁴⁴ Hopgood disputes the role of religion in the case of Sri Lanka, arguing that religion is not a feature, which can explain the emergence of suicide missions amongst the Tamil Tigers.⁴⁵ Although the Tamils are a Hindu minority in a predominantly Buddhist country, it is difficult to accept the Tamils feared religious persecution given the passive and non-confrontational nature of Buddhism. Bloom agrees with Hopgood, suggesting that religion played little part in the motivation by the Tamil Tigers to adopt suicide terrorism beyond the role of Hinduism as an ethnic marker.⁴⁶

At the 2006 *Beyond Belief* Conference, anthropologist Dr Scott Atran challenged two empirical claims by Harris in an attempt to discredit his universal theory of religion. Firstly, he highlights (as many others have) that volunteers for the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka were not driven by religion, but were more likely to have been suffering from personal loss.⁴⁷ Secondly, against claims that Islam has a monopoly on suicide terrorism, Atran correctly points to the secular insurgent group, the *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (PFLP).⁴⁸ Between 2001 and 2004 during the second intifada, at least six individuals from PFLP successfully carried out suicide missions in Israel killing thirteen civilians. Leonard Weinberg offers further evidence discounting Harris in his book chapter 'Suicide Terrorism for Secular Causes'.⁴⁹ According to Weinberg, two types of Viet Cong units were involved in

⁴³ C. Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing*, Princeton University Press, 2004, p.60

⁴⁴ Pape *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* pp.79-80

⁴⁵ S. Hopgood, 'Tamil Tigers 1987-2002' In Gambetta *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* p. 76

⁴⁶ Bloom *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* p.20

⁴⁷ S. Atran, 'The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2006, p. 127-147

⁴⁸ S. Atran, 'Beyond Belief Conference', [online video], 2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wu6qQDphSGU>, 07:50, (accessed 18th September 2014)

⁴⁹ L. Weinberg, *Suicide Terrorism for Secular Causes*. In: A. Pedahzur, (ed), *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalisation of Martyrdom*, London & New York, Routledge, 2006, pp.108-122

carrying out acts of suicide terrorism. The most widespread and notorious were 'suicide cells' or 'suicide teams', created at the beginning of November 1967 in connection with the General Offensive and General Uprising.⁵⁰ Although the Viet Cong were recognised as insurgents, not terrorists, thereby highlighting the earlier critique by Crenshaw, they still fit the profile of individuals willing to sacrifice their life in order to take the lives of their enemy.

British Muslim terrorists are rarely uneducated and poor and there is no evidence any were suffering from mental illness when they volunteered to pursue terrorism. This leaves few reasons to account for their seemingly irrational decision. Religion provides an effective set of narratives, symbols, ideas and obligations that recruiters can use to convince young men to volunteer for a suicide mission. Consequently, in the absence of other theories, in the case of British Muslims, religion as an instrument of radicalisation offers a strong explanation. Muslims who pursue terrorism in the UK commonly originate from the most religiously conservative areas. For example, East London and the Sparkbrook area of Birmingham have been accused of being 'hotbeds of radicalisation'.⁵¹ The absence of convicted terrorists over the age of thirty-five, suggests only the young are willing to accept the political ideology pushed on them by fundamentalist preachers.

Occupation

Robert Pape, currently at the University of Chicago and founder of the *Chicago Project on Suicide and Terrorism*, argues his theory of *occupation* adequately explains the entire universe of suicide terrorism.⁵² Drawing on a comprehensive dataset comprised of over three hundred attacks between 1980 and 2003; Pape argues the tactic is used successfully to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from territory considered by terrorists to be their own.⁵³ In contrast to authoritarian regimes that require little popular support, democracies are especially vulnerable to the devastation and fear that suicide terrorism generates. Examples

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.116

⁵¹ Staff Reporter, 'Terror Arrests Anger Community', *BBC News Online*, 1st February 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6320021.stm>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

⁵² Pape *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*

⁵³ *Ibid*.

outlined by Pape include the bombing of the US Marine barracks in 1983, attacks against the Israeli Defence Force by Hezbollah in South Lebanon, and attacks against Israeli civilians by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza and the West Bank. In each case, Pape contends that suicide terrorism is used to force the opponent to end their occupation or at the very least cede concessions during protracted negotiations.⁵⁴ Pape's theory does not command universal agreement. Critics identify a number of important flaws with his underlying assumptions and conclusions. Authors Pedahzur and Perliger point out that more than one-third of suicide attacks from 1982 to June 2005 were carried out against undemocratic regimes.⁵⁵ In their study of five countries in which terrorist groups conducted over 80% of the total suicide attacks carried out worldwide, the majority were directed against weak democracies.

In the case of suicide terrorism carried out in Palestine, which provides 30% of Pape's dataset, questions have been raised over the extent to which the tactic can be said to have been successful. Jon Elster argues that Pape's claim, 'suicide attacks between 1994-1995 forced Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories ahead of schedule' rests exclusively on ambiguous statements by then Prime Minister Rabin and self-serving statements by Hamas.⁵⁶ Brym and Araj claim that anything conceded by Israel was by no means sufficient to offset the destructive impact of retaliation, which included arbitrary arrests, internment, house searches and crippling checkpoints.⁵⁷ Mia Bloom notes that public opinion polls indicate that according to every available indicator, economic, social, health, etc, Palestinians are worse off now than they were before the al-Aqsa intifada.⁵⁸ Any observer familiar with daily life in the West Bank would find it impossible to accept that Palestinians achieved anything tangible from suicide terrorism. The satisfaction and restitution of honour that might have been drawn from limited acts of retaliation was and continues to be significantly

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 45

⁵⁵ A. Pedahzur and A. Perliger, 'The Changing Nature of Suicide Attacks - A Social Network Perspective', *Social Forces*, vol. 84, no. 4, 2006, p. 265

⁵⁶ J. Elster, 'Motivations and beliefs in Suicide Missions' In Gambetta *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* p.249

⁵⁷ R. Brym and B. Araj, 'Suicide bombing as strategy and interaction: the case of the second intifada', *Social Forces*, vol. 84, no. 4, 2006, pp.1965-82

⁵⁸ Bloom *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* p. 62

offset by the punishing counter-insurgency strategy in place today throughout the occupied territories.

Despite semantic questions on democracy and what constitutes a successful campaign of suicide terrorism, there is reason to accept the core premise of Pape's theory. It also conveniently accounts for the important Sri Lanka case. It is enough for the proponents of suicide terrorism to perceive the tactic works, however limited, for it to constitute sufficient motivation. Success, for example, may involve nothing more than uniting the population. If resistance groups felt they gained absolutely nothing from suicide terrorism then it is difficult to understand why they would continue (assuming they act rationally). What does strongly undermine Pape's theory of occupation however, is that Palestinians continue to live under occupation today albeit it to a lesser extent, and yet there has been no active suicide terrorism for at least five years. Although the West Bank barrier has made it difficult to carry out such a mission, there remain plenty of less secure targets not covered by the barrier. The Palestinians are no better off after the second intifada and the occupation continues; despite this, suicide bombing has ceased. The only difference post-intifada is that since Hamas took over Gaza, they are no longer in competition with Fatah. Administration of Palestine has been divided between the two groups and this has removed the need for them to compete over limited popular support and finance.

At the social level, Pape argues that occupied populations support suicide terrorism because the alternative - a successful conquest by a foreign invader - would be too damaging.⁵⁹ In the case of the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, Pape suggests that community support for suicide terrorism was driven by a 'fear of religious persecution' and that 'the most prominent factor driving Tamil support for individual self sacrifice came from a fear of Buddhist extremism'.⁶⁰ The absence of any empirical data on 'Buddhist Extremism' beyond acts of self-immolation by Buddhist Monks greatly weakens Pape's suggestion. In the case of Palestine, the occupation theory for explaining social support is more obvious given the genuine belief amongst Palestinians that Zionism presents an existential threat. In Iraq however, the swift timetabling of elections and consequent introduction of a democratic parliament suggests the population (if they ever did support suicide terrorism) were not

⁵⁹ Pape *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* pp.88-92

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp.140-146

convinced the Americans wanted to stay any longer than they had to. Although as Pape has argued, suicide terrorism began in 2003 against the Western occupiers, it quickly became associated more with sectarian violence designed to destabilise the new government.

At the individual level, it is difficult to disaggregate personal motivations given their stratification from personal trauma to the pursuit of supposed heavenly rewards in the afterlife. If occupation alone is sufficient to motivate a volunteer, then how can we account for the relative absence of volunteers over thirty? Why are those who have spent a lifetime under occupation not at the head of the queue? One can hardly argue that physical fitness and good health is necessary to trigger an explosive device. Whether or not a group offers material support would not limit an individual living under occupation from driving a vehicle into enemy citizens. The absence of suicide terrorism in countries indirectly occupied by American forces - namely Yemen, Bahrain and Kuwait, strongly discounts occupation as a personal level motivation. While occupation provides a strong explanation for the formation of resistance groups and their decision to adopt suicide terrorism, Pape's theory of occupation fails to adequately explain both social and individual level support.

In the wake of 9/11, the theory of occupation has been further weakened. This has been due to a number of suicide bombings in regimes that are less than democratic and who are not engaged in any kind of occupation. Pape has sought to salvage his theory by arguing that suicide bombings carried out in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Indonesia were proxy bombings aimed at the United States and were therefore coercive against a democracy. Pedahzur rejects this claim, arguing, 'for the most part, suicide actions performed under the flag of the jihad and attributed to Al-Qaeda were, in effect, local initiatives stemming from Islamic organizational interests operating within the borders of a given country and whose aspirations principally amounted to a chance of rule in that same country'.⁶¹ In respect of British Muslims pursuing suicide terrorism, it is argued that the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq provided the necessary motivation. However, domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims did not occur until 2003, two years after coalition forces first arrived in Afghanistan. Furthermore, two former Labour Home

⁶¹ Pedahzur 'The Changing Nature of Suicide Attacks - A Social Network Perspective' p.109

Secretaries strenuously reject any suggestion that the invasion of Iraq acted as a catalyst for the London bombings.⁶²

Strategic outbidding

Occupation, while important, is insufficient as a universal explanation for suicide terrorism. While Bloom agrees with Pape that volunteers seek autonomy or independence, she argues instead that it is the desire to enhance an organisations prestige that helps mobilize support, publicity and finance.⁶³ Described by Bloom as ‘strategic outbidding’, her theory is based on a study of how group’s have deployed suicide bombers in Palestine, Sri Lanka and Turkey between 1994 and 2004. During the second intifada, which began in September 2000, Hamas sought to outbid the governing Fatah organisation by orchestrating an orgy of indiscriminate violence against the Israelis. These acts resonated strongly with the Palestinians who were suffering greatly from a heavy-handed counter insurgency campaign conducted by the occupying Israeli Defence Force. According to Bloom, support for the bombings and the radical Islamic groups increased after every suicide mission concomitant with declining support for Fatah.⁶⁴ Crenshaw cites Scott Atran, Dipak Gupta and Kusum Mundra as all tending to support Bloom by suggesting that the effectiveness of suicide terrorism depends on its ability to mobilize constituents in order to dominate the competition in a local power struggle.⁶⁵

In support of her theory of competitive political mobilisation, Bloom points to the branding of martyrdom videos and the competing claims of responsibility that typically follow a successful mission. Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad issued competing claims of responsibility for the infamously devastating ninth of August 2001 attack on the Sbarro pizzeria. Again, in May 2002, Hamas and the PFLP issued competing claims for the suicide attack on the Netanya market.⁶⁶ No fewer than four

⁶² Interviews conducted by the researcher with former home secretary’s David Blunkett and Charles Clarke, London, October 2013. Transcripts available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

⁶³ Bloom *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* pp. 3, 16-17, 76-77

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.70

⁶⁵ Crenshaw *Explaining Suicide Terrorism* p.145

⁶⁶ Bloom *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* p.73

different groups tried to claim credit for the bus bombing of 17 July 2002, which killed five people and injured forty.⁶⁷ Bloom notes that attacks are much more closely related to periods when Arafat is weaker and rival organizations compete to fill the power vacuum.⁶⁸ Imad Faluji and Darb Ashwak have argued that Palestinians were disillusioned with both Arafat and the Palestinian Authority in general. Given the deadlocked peace process, it was a perfect moment for radical groups to increase their share of the political market by engaging in violence.⁶⁹ In further support of the strategic outbidding theory, Kydd and Walter identify extremist violence as being strategic with the aim being to influence not only the enemy, but also rival groups and the local population.⁷⁰

Bloom has focused her study on the second intifada; a time of significant unrest, a time when Palestinians were engaged in an existential crisis. She notes that of the 225 suicide attacks that occurred between 1993 and 2004, none were aimed towards blocking the peace process but rather at internal political rivalry.⁷¹ Before the second intifada, both Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) had a long history of engaging in Suicide Terrorism. The first suicide bombing in Palestine occurred in 1989 near Kiryat Yearim. An operative from PIJ detonated a device aboard Bus 405, killing 16 passengers. Four years later in 1993, Hamas became the second Palestinian resistance group to carry out a suicide mission. Over the next 12 months, Hamas and PIJ worked together on three further missions resulting in the death of 16 Israeli citizens. It would be another eight years before the ruling Fatah party would instruct its militant wing Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to follow suit. If suicide terrorism is about outbidding rivals, then why did Fatah wait over ten years before joining the fray? Support for political opponents fluctuated long before the second intifada and therefore if suicide terrorism resonated so strongly with the population, one expects that Fatah would have engaged far sooner than they did.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.73

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.70

⁶⁹ Bloom *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* p.64

⁷⁰ A. Kydd and B. Walter, 'Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence', *International Organizations*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2002, pp.263-296

⁷¹ Bloom *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* p.34

Far from seeking to compete with one another, Palestinian insurgents have often united against the harsh counter insurgency campaign waged by Israel. Between 2005 and 2006, Hamas carried out only one operation, compared to five by Al-Aqsa and seven by PIJ. If suicide terrorism is about outbidding, why did Hamas as the number two political party, not engage more significantly? Pape and Victor Ricolfi have both discounted the outbidding theory, pointing out that Palestinian insurgent groups have often worked together on joint missions.⁷² Terrorist groups may compete with each other at a time when public support for suicide terrorism is at its highest. Those willing to engage in the most vicious, most visually compelling acts of violence satisfy demands for retaliation after the latest round of targeted assassinations or ‘strategic incursions’. As a reward, that group is likely to enjoy greater support domestically and internationally. As a punishment, the group is certain to come under greater scrutiny by the enemy, suffer from an increased number of assassinations and face political sanctions across the board. The terrorist group, which refers to itself as the Islamic State (IS), enjoyed a significant increase in support both financially and in terms of recruitment after it began publishing videos on the Internet showing its overwhelming capacity to carry out what observers have described as crimes against humanity.

Jon Elster argues that game-theoretic rational choice theories like Bloom’s are doomed to fail for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, organisers may not be that rational (especially in wartime when cognitive bias is high) and secondly, game theory has little to say about the equilibrium outcome of strategic interaction between more than two actors.⁷³ In November 1998, 75 per cent of Palestinians ceased to support suicide operations altogether. By 1999, over 70 per cent of Palestinians had faith in the peace process, and support for suicide bombings fell to 20 per cent. Support for Hamas at this time was at its lowest point ever (below 12 per cent). Throughout this period, when it appeared that the peace process would succeed and the majority of Palestinians preferred peace to continued violence, *suicide terrorism continued*. This suggests groups will engage in the tactic regardless of public opinion. Public support appears to act independently. It is more likely explained by the level of brutality directed against the population by the enemy. Martha Crenshaw argues that

⁷² Ricolfi *Palestinians, 1981-2003* p.100

⁷³ Elster ‘Motivations and beliefs in Suicide Missions’ pp.257-58

Bloom's analysis of Sri Lanka, one of her three major case studies, is contradictory. By her own admission, when the LTTE began its suicide attacks in 1987, the other Tamil militant groups had largely been destroyed.⁷⁴ For a theory of outbidding to hold, the LTTE would have to have engaged in suicide terrorism between 1983 and 1987 when the group faced its most ardent opposition. Pape argues that it was not until 1990 that the LTTE first began suicide terrorism, well after the elimination of its rivals.⁷⁵

Outbidding theory is to an extent persuasive in the case of modern suicide terrorism, in particular the case of Palestine. However, it is significantly weak with respect to post-modern terrorism of the type witnessed across Europe since 2003. Far from seeking to compete with Al-Qaeda, groups like Islamic Jihad in the Arab Peninsula, previously led by the American Anwar Al-Awlaki, have sought to present themselves as followers of Bin Laden rather than competitors. Yoram Schweitzer argues that the ultimate goal of Al-Qaeda is to pressure the West into changing its policies toward the Muslim world, and to that end they deliberately promote suicide terrorism in the hope that others will imitate their modus operandi.⁷⁶ In the case of Europe, young jihadists have little, if any, genuine relationship with any particular group. According to Scott Atran, these 'bunch of guys' seek out Al-Qaeda in the hope of obtaining training and guidance in the pursuit of martyrdom.⁷⁷ More importantly, it is simply not the case that so called 'home-grown' terrorists have engaged in any kind of strategic outbidding against co-jihadists either at home or overseas. Rather co-operation is the norm with conspirators doing whatever they can to assist fellow terrorists. Islamic terrorist cells in the UK are known to have co-operated and trained together in Pakistan.

From a British perspective, the outbidding theory holds little weight since British Muslims who volunteer for terrorism do not belong to any recognised group. Cells form *ad hoc* in order to carry out a one off mission and they do not compete with anyone in order to do this. However, outbidding theory may be developed to

⁷⁴ Crenshaw *Explaining Suicide Terrorism* p.146

⁷⁵ Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* p.254

⁷⁶ Y. Schweitzer and S. Goldstein, 'Al-Qaeda and the Internationalization of Suicide Terrorism', *Institute for National Security Studies*, 2005, p. 28

⁷⁷ Atran 'The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism' p.135

provide an explanation at the individual level of analysis. Islamic fundamentalists, in particular converts are known to pursue a greater level of religiosity amongst their peer group. Often seeking to atone for past mistakes, new Muslims and those who have embraced their home religion more devoutly are at the forefront of the Islamic Fundamentalist Movement. For example, middle class Richard Dart who converted to Islam under the direction of preacher Anjem Choudary was arrested in July 2012 accused of plotting to bomb the funeral parade of soldiers returning from Afghanistan.⁷⁸ Men like Dart gather privately in homes to discuss the latest addition of the Al-Qaeda *Inspire* magazine while slowly encouraging one another to hold more extreme views about the West. Indeed it is through this process of *outbidding* whereby members of the group seek to be the most revolutionary, that agreements to carry out terrorism first emerge. While some members will fall away, the core element made up of the most committed will further seek to outbid one another as the plot takes shape and the ambitions become increasingly extreme.

Trauma

In the early 1990s, psychologist Charles Snyder derived what he referred to as 'Hope Theory'. According to his research, hope consists of agency and pathways. When a person has hope, they possess the will, determination and a set of strategies to achieve their goals. Those who lack hope, tend to adopt mastery goals. They choose easy tasks that do not challenge them or offer any opportunity for growth. It is believed people with mastery goals act helpless and feel a lack of control over their environment because they do not believe they have the capacity to obtain the future they want. In short, they have no hope. Due to the reality of occupation, Palestinians commonly feel that they are not in control of their own lives. Consequently, they have no hope and this means they choose easy tasks, one of which includes volunteering for suicide bombing. If life cannot mean anything on earth, sacrificing it for religious beliefs at least restores in them a degree of hope. Young Palestinian men and recently women who volunteer for suicide bombing operations in Israel, are commonly raised to

⁷⁸ S. Tomlinson, 'Only Allah can judge me: Muslim convert Richard Dart refuses to stand in dock as he is sentenced to six years in prison for terrorism offences', *Daily Mail Online*, 23rd April 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2314594/Muslim-convert-Richard-Dart-refuses-stand-dock-sentenced-years-prison-terrorism-offences.html>, (accessed 19th Sep 2014)

believe Jews (whom they are taught to dehumanize) stole their land. Post-traumatic stress disorder and visceral hatred all contribute to the explanation of why young men readily agree to detonate explosives strapped to their bodies while riding buses in down town Tel-Aviv. From a western perspective, Cottee suggests that terrorism in Europe is best understood as a collective response or *solution* to the strains encountered by young Muslims, imposed on them by the circumstances in which they find themselves.⁷⁹

Hopelessness, frustration, humiliation, persecution, grief, anger and injustice can significantly traumatise those living in a widely marginalised society. Former chair of the Armed Forces Muslim association, Afzal Amin has said, 'young Muslims in inner city Britain have been left disenfranchised by politics and let down by imams and other community leaders'.⁸⁰ Recognising the role of radicalising agents, Amin reflects on how British Muslims 'turn to this gang of brigands cloaked with a false version of Islam'. Drawing parallels between British Muslims and the white working class, Amin believes, 'They have rebelled against everything that is familiar to them, but instead of Mohicans or facial piercings, they have opted for the YouTube glory of becoming an internationally wanted terrorist at war with the superpower that is the US.'⁸¹ Civil War in Syria that has raged since 2010 has been fought both on and offline with Social media providing a significant channel in which to recruit British Muslims. Videos showing the exploits of terrorist group ISIS have proved popular as well as specific recruitment propaganda that continues to flood sites like twitter and facebook.

Although trauma might appear to be specific to individuals, resistance groups and society can equally suffer. A targeted assassination against the leader of a group or an incursion into a refugee camp can result in strong feelings of hatred, which subsequently lead to calls for retaliation. Brym and Araj both support this assertion

⁷⁹ S. Cottee, 'Jihadism as a Subcultural Response to Social Strain: Extending Marc Sageman's Bunch of Guys Thesis', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 23, no. 5, 2011, pp. 730-751

⁸⁰ J. Merrick, 'Exclusive: We share blame for creating 'jihad generation', says Muslim strategist', *Independent Online*, 24th August 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/exclusive-we-share-blame-for-creating-jihad-generation-says-muslim-strategist-9687896.html>, (accessed 19th Sep 2014)

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

stating that the motivation for Palestinians was revenge and retaliation in response to specific Israeli actions.⁸² Weingast and Rui de-Figueiredo have also argued that violence is often retaliatory.⁸³ This school of thought traces Palestinian suicide bombings to Israeli provocations, beginning with the Hebron Massacre by Baruch Goldstein. Other provocations include the opening of the tunnel under the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Israeli policy of 'targeted assassinations' of Palestinian militant leaders, for example Hamas's bomb maker, Yahiyeh Ayyash⁸⁴, Izz Eddin al-Qassam Brigade leader Salah Shehada and his family and, in 2004 Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. In the case of British Muslims who commit terrorism, there is no hierarchical structure to target and there is no evidence to suggest the Muslim community support the actions of individual terrorists. Although protests followed the imprisonment of preachers Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza Al-Masri and the increased surveillance of Muslims communities, it has never been suggested that any of the terrorist conspiracies that began in 2003 were the consequence of such action. Al-Masri claimed during his trial in 2013 that *he* was the force preventing terrorism and that his incarceration meant he was no longer effective at restraining his fellow fundamentalists.

Although such flash points can result in immediate retaliation by way of a suicide mission, a medium to long-term campaign relies on the construction and manipulation of trauma, which builds up over a period. Pedahzur believes that communities who have experienced a long and painful conflict with a powerful enemy eventually react to a strong sense of injustice.⁸⁵ Palestinians readily ask how it can be fair that Israeli children can play on the beach, drink clean water, and attend the best schools when their children are forced to live in poverty. Mohammed Hafez suggests that Palestinians came to venerate martyrdom because of a 'confluence of

⁸² Brym & Araj 'Suicide bombing as strategy and interaction: the case of the second intifada' pp.1965-82

⁸³ R. Figueiredo and B. Weingast, 'Vicious Cycles: Endogenous Political Extremism and Political Violence', *American Political Science Association*, Boston, September 1998

⁸⁴ Council on Foreign Relations, *Terrorism: Questions and Answers, Hamas, Islamic Jihad*, 2002, <http://www.terrorismanswers.com>, (accessed 8th April 2012)

⁸⁵ Pedahzur 'The Changing Nature of Suicide Attacks - A Social Network Perspective'

perceived threats and a sense of victimization'.⁸⁶ In Palestine, the degradation of everyday life becomes intolerable. Constant Israeli military presence, boredom, anxiety, and the impossibility of leading a normal life combine, 'The explosive mixture of prison, exile, living on the run, the instability of life and the constant need to keep moving to avoid being arrested...give rise to an extremism that can even overcome fear'.⁸⁷ The alternative to this traumatic humiliation is utopia. Oliver and Steinberg describe some intended bombers as being ecstatic about their fate.⁸⁸ Although the Muslim community in the UK do not support acts of terrorism, counter terrorism police have found it difficult to develop trust and co-operation. Isolation appears driven by two factors. Firstly, media reports will often talk of Muslim communities being 'hotbeds of radicalisation' thereby causing them to become more defensive, especially since far-right groups often seek to capitalise on articles in the *Daily Mail*. Secondly, critics have accused the government's counter-terrorism strategy known as PREVENT of constructing the Muslim community as a threat to national security.

Contrary to what might appear seemingly obvious, it is generally accepted that volunteers for suicide terrorism are rarely, if ever, suicidal. The very term 'suicide terrorism' is therefore somewhat misleading. Nasra Hasan argues that many Palestinian bombers have suffered humiliation and persecution at the hands of Israeli forces. However, she insists that they are not suffering from any mental illness or personality disorders.⁸⁹ Studies of Palestinian volunteers consistently reinforce claims by militant groups that anyone seeking death as a means of personal escape are refused support. In a study of fourteen regional commanders of Palestinian militant groups, most said they would not take mentally unstable candidates, suicidal people who want to die for personal reasons, and criminals.⁹⁰ Only those who love life but are willing to die courageously for the cause of their people are mobilized in the pursuit of martyrdom. Gambetta, Pedahzur, Pape, and others refer to altruism, which

⁸⁶ Hafez *Manufacturing Human Bombs* p.61

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.116

⁸⁸ Oliver and Steinberg *The Road to Martyrs' Square: A journey into the world of the Suicide Bomber* p.31

⁸⁹ Hassan 'Letter from Gaza: An Arsenal of Believers'

⁹⁰ Merari 'Personality Characteristics of Self Martyrs/Suicide Bombers and Organizers of Suicide Attacks'

can often be a reaction to trauma. British Muslims who volunteer for terrorism often talk about seeing the deaths of co-religionists and feeling significantly traumatised. This fits with the suggestion these men are emphatic and have a great deal of love, which causes them to feel the pain and suffering of others more than an average person would. Mohammad Sidique Khan was clear when he said, 'until we feel security, you will be our targets and until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight'. The word 'gassing' is interesting because the west adheres to the Geneva Convention of the use of chemical weapons. Khan may therefore have been trying to draw parallels between the gassing of the Jews and the treatment of modern day Muslims. He is arguing that western oppression of Muslims is as much a tragedy as the holocaust and that consequently he felt obliged to act.

A person acting altruistically may be struggling to cope with the guilt of not having suffered the same humiliation and subjugation as their co-religionists. Khosrokhavar suggests 'immersion in the western world has defiled them because they have been unfairly spared the same fate as others'.⁹¹ Sacrifice for the cause can therefore be both personally redemptive and a mark of honour, a way of becoming a hero and part of an exalted elite. The July 7th 2005 bombers were all from relatively privileged families and were fortunate to have escaped the kind of suffering experienced on a daily basis in Palestine, Chechnya and Middle Eastern. The same is true for many of the 9/11 bombers who were educated to degree level. The poverty witnessed in the slums of Egypt is alleged to have strongly influenced 9/11 ringleader Mohammed Atta. His desire to strike back at those who funded the rule of President Mubarak through military aid masked as 'humanitarian intervention' was therefore a natural response to the trauma by proxy he felt from his observations of the Egyptian people.

Trauma is arguably the most powerful explanation for why otherwise perfectly sane, rational young men and women volunteer for suicide terrorism. Even in the absence of religion and a foreign occupier, individuals suffering from consistent trauma and driven by a sense of injustice would likely fight back by whatever means necessary. Few would be surprised if a father grieving the death of his child decided to take violent revenge against those responsible, even if he was killed in the process.

⁹¹ Khosrokhavar *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs* p.152

Although trauma may explain why a population suffering checkpoints, incursions and house searches might support the tactic of suicide bombing, it is less convincing in the case of terrorist groups. Notwithstanding the immediate trauma and desire to retaliate, that one can find after a targeted assassination, knee jerk acts of suicide terrorism account for only a handful of missions carried out by groups who employ the tactic strategically. Consequently, trauma fails as a single explanatory theory of suicide terrorism. In almost every theatre where terrorists adopt suicide bombing, the population as a whole has suffered at the hands of either a foreign or a domestic aggressor. Chechnya is a powerful case study in this respect. The Russian army has carried out systematic human rights abuses as part of the most aggressive, violent and abhorrent counter insurgency campaign ever undertaken by an alleged 'democracy'. Consequently, the conclusion that trauma holds explanatory weight across the entire universe of suicide terrorism gains significant merit. However, within the context of British Muslims who volunteer for terrorism, direct trauma is notably weak. The London bombers experienced none; they never suffered any kind of brutality at the hands of the state, nothing that would construct a sense of injustice and drive them to carry out an act of revenge. It may however be argued that British Muslims observing the death of co-religionists in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from *trauma by proxy*. In September 2000, an Israeli sniper shot dead Palestinian father and son, Jamal and Muhammad al-Durrah. Muhammad appears on film crying shortly before a burst of gunfire ends his life. This incident is commonly discussed by British fundamentalist Muslims standing trial for terrorism offences thereby suggesting it directly influenced their mindset. It almost certainly added weight to the political narrative promoted by the Islamic fundamentalist movement in which Jews represent the greatest enemy of Islam. Three years after the al-Durrah incident, two British fundamentalist Muslims travelled to Gaza and volunteered as suicide bombers targeting a restaurant in Tel Aviv.

This literature review has explored the various mainstream theories that seek to account for what motivates individuals to pursue terrorism. In particular, this chapter has focused on explanations for the specific act of suicide terrorism. Reviewing each theory, the author has considered its applicability to the British experience of suicide terrorism that began in 2003. While religion and trauma offer powerful narratives that have strongly influenced British fundamentalists to pursue terrorism, there is a clear failure within the literature to explore the social environment

responsible for incubating a mindset necessary for suicide terrorism. In order for British Muslims to experience trauma by proxy, they required political narratives in which co-religionists appeared to be suffering at the hands of an aggressive neo-colonialist foreign occupier. The following substantive chapters of this dissertation presents the results of a three-year study into the social environment that has mobilised British fundamentalists and pushed a minority to cross the line in pursuit of terrorism

Methodology

This critically reflective chapter formally outlines the social science approach taken in the thesis in investigating of the primary subject. Objectively, the aim is to elucidate the chosen methodology and explain why this approach was the most appropriate way of attacking the questions identified at the outset. Section 1, “Research Design”, discusses the epistemological and ontological limitations inherent in the study of human behaviour and personal decision-making. In particular, we confront a classic “black box problem” around motivation that has dogged terrorism researchers from more than forty years.¹ In the absence of mind reading technology, how do we know for certain what a person was thinking before taking his or her own life in a suicide-bombing mission? Section 2 of this chapter presents the central research question (CRQ) posited by the researcher after a great deal of theorizing and an exhaustive review of the available literature and discourse surrounding the thesis. To operationalize the CRQ at the chapter level, the researcher developed a set of sub questions allowing the investigation to be broken down into manageable sections. Section 4 details the research methods employed by the author to gather and subsequently analyse primary data, specifically transcripts from semi-structured elite interviews, archives of literature published by fundamentalist groups and lastly a series of detailed case studies. The final two sections of this chapter are important. Firstly, the author discusses the ethical considerations that have arisen throughout the study. Secondly, in concluding this explanatory chapter, the researcher outlines how this dissertation makes an important and original contribution to the existing literature concerning the study of domestic terrorism carried out in the UK by British Muslims.

Research Design

The primary objective of this thesis is to postulate an original analysis to explain why British Muslims readily volunteer as suicide terrorists. Since researchers are unable to interview those who are successful, it is reasonable to argue that regardless of how structurally sound an investigation, we can never truly be certain of what a person was

¹ M. Crenshaw, 'The Causes of Terrorism', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1981, pp. 379-399

thinking in the moments before detonation. Recognising this problem, Silke has suggested that terrorism is not a topic easily researched, or at least it does not give that impression on first inspection.² The 2005 London bombers independently sacrificed their own lives in order to murder fellow citizens. So great was the bond between them, and so great was their belief in what they were doing, that each carried out the mission not knowing whether the others had followed suit. Researchers seeking to understand the relationship between cell members face a significant challenge given how “closed off” the environment is in which they exist, particularly in the hours and minutes before they make their fateful choices.

Suicide bombing is neither accidental, nor committed in a moment of madness. During the seven-month operational cycle between inception and execution, all four London bombers had time to reflect on their individual and collective motivation. At some point before the event, each member of the cell recorded a *martyrdom video* discussing his religious beliefs and personal reasons for carrying out the attack. Our understanding of what motivated the WWII Japanese Kamikaze derives from studying their private diaries. There was no reason to bias entries with any kind of political agenda since the writers never intended what they wrote to enter the public domain. Consequently, this source of evidence is valid and reliable and provides a sincere understanding of what the pilots were thinking in the run up to their suicide mission. In contrast, modern day terrorist groups typically use so-called *martyrdom videos* to serve as legitimizing propaganda and a tool of further recruitment. A third party may have scripted what the martyr says making it difficult to discern genuine motivations. Internet material and videos now constitute the primary mode of terrorist fundraising, training and recruitment, and so we should assume significant organisational input into such testimonies.³ Researchers must therefore be cautious when drawing any conclusions based solely upon such material.

Recognising the ontological and epistemological limitations inherent with any examination of suicide bombing, this author has conducted an empirical study that

² A. Silke, ‘The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol.13, no. 4, 2001, pp. 1-14

³ A. George, ‘The Causal Nexus Between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision- Making Behaviour: The ‘Operational Code’ Belief System’ in Lawrence S. Falkowski, (ed), 1979, *Psychological Models in International Politics*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, pp. 95–124

triangulates several primary sources of information. Although we cannot positively state with absolute certainty that volunteer A had been motivated by reasons XYZ, we can show evidence the majority of suicide bombers espoused similar politics and engaged in comparable activities in the years leading up to their attack. Although this does not necessarily demonstrate causality, we may reasonably conclude that if we expose an individual to religious fundamentalism and extremist politics, and then task them with fundraising for an overseas militant group, these two factors will contribute towards motivating and facilitating that individual towards following a path that may lead them into committing acts of terrorism. For example, since 2010, a growing number of British fundamentalist Muslims who regularly participated in demonstrations calling for the establishment of Sharia, have since travelled to Syria and fought on behalf of the insurgent group known as ISIS. In May 2014, leader of ISIS, Abu Al-Baghbadi, declared himself Caliph of the official *Islamic Caliphate* spanning northern Syria and Iraq, governed according to Sharia.⁴

Remarkably, to date there has been little academic focus on the relatively non-violent environment surrounding British Muslims who pursue acts of terrorism. Since 2005, government policy has been to engage with Muslim communities, in particular those considered vulnerable to radicalisation by overseas extremists. Consequently, academics have paid significant attention to the impact of counter terrorism policies on individuals and the mainstream Muslim community. Unfortunately, this has meant little recognition or indeed investigation of the milieu of fundamentalist Muslims who operate almost entirely isolated from society. Notorious Muslim cleric Abu Hamza Al-Masri did not attend community meetings; his followers considered themselves Muslim first, second and third. To fundamentalists, Britain represents nothing more than a passport. Counter radicalisation strategy after 2005 was therefore irrelevant since Al-Masri, his followers and others like them, operated outside the mainstream Muslim community – specifically, outside the environment upon which counter radicalisation focused. After the murder of Soldier Lee Rigby in 2013, the importance and the need to dismantle or at least disrupt these dangerous and self-isolating elements, acting on the periphery of the Muslim community became abundantly clear. Increasingly, and particularly in the wake of this attack, the UK government has

⁴ J. Berry, 'Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2002, pp. 679-682

shifted towards a much tougher stance in which the promotion of anti-western political narratives either by individuals or groups is no longer tolerated.

Aiming to fill the void that exists within the study of environment as an incubator of terrorism, this research is unique and timely, especially given events in Syria post 2010. Since 2011 possibly earlier, British Muslims have travelled to the country in order to fight on behalf of the insurgent group known as ISIS. Several of these men stand accused of committing the most barbaric acts of terrorism including the execution of western hostages. Observers believe one particular individual known in the press, as “Jihadi John” and responsible for the beheading of at least five hostages, is an individual radicalised while growing up in East London. Theoretically, this researcher advances the proposition that acts of terrorism tend to be a structural by-product of the socio-political organisation of British fundamentalist Muslims since the late 1990s. Until 2003, no British Muslim had ever sought to murder fellow citizens as part of a terrorist campaign designed to influence government. Observers commonly identify western foreign policies, in particular support for Israel and interference as the underlying motivation for acts of terrorism carried out in the UK by British Muslims. Weakening this theory is evidence that despite rampant neo-colonialism before the millennium including sanctions on Iraq that led to the starvation of women and children, British Muslims failed to mobilise and carry out acts of terrorism either in the UK or overseas.

Sanctions on Iraq were no less brutal than the events witnessed at Abu Ghraib or the Battle of Fallujah and yet there were no terrorist attacks in the UK by British Muslims during the 1990s. Pointing the blame at foreign policy is reductionist and fails to recognise the importance of the environment from which individuals have been politicised and encouraged to give everything including their lives in order to achieve certain objectives. Towards the end of the 1990s the environment necessary for terrorism first emerged in London. Thereafter, a minority of British Muslims began adopting a fundamentalist religious and political ideology based on a rejection of western ideas and norms. Years later, this mobilisation would lead to isolation of Islamic fundamentalists in the UK and eventually conflict and rebellion against the British state and its citizens.

Environment is important in respect of the long-term incubation of terrorism. In making the case to focus on environment above the individual and the terrorist cell,

let us reflect for a moment on the case of David Copeland also known as the “London Nail Bomber”. An established member of the far-right British National Party (BNP), Copeland told police he targeted ethnic minorities because he wanted to start a race war, one that would eventually lead to their repatriation. During active service as a steward in the BNP, Copeland learned how to construct improvised explosive devices. Although acting alone, parallels between his stated motivation and the politics of the BNP, suggest there is good reason to conclude his involvement with the party, helped incubate a mindset in which he rationalised acts of extreme violence. With respect to the roughly sixty British Muslims who have pursued suicide terrorism, almost all of them have strongly embraced *Islamic fundamentalism*. Like Copeland, London bomber Mohamed Sidique Khan was deeply influenced by the inherited politics that came from socialising with others who shared his beliefs, indicating a degree of “Groupthink”. The only difference between these two terrorists is that Copeland had no faith in the afterlife, he choose prison over the divine rewards pursued by Khan.⁵

A well-established theory within psychology argues that persons act differently in groups than alone. This is especially true when encouraged and supported by others or those in authority. In 1978, over nine hundred members of a “cult” known as the *Peoples Temple Agricultural Project* committed mass suicide on the orders of leader Jim Jones. Upon hearing the news, none of those persons who had previously left the environment felt compelled to follow suit. Jones and trusted fellows around him exclusively controlled the politics and the practices of members. Isolation and “groupthink” therefore clearly played a part in these disturbing events. Without the authoritative influence, extreme beliefs held by members were no longer tenable. It is not enough that a person believes something; they must be part of an environment in which others share the same beliefs in order that they might act upon them. Drawing parallels with Islamic fundamentalism, observers can better understand the pathways in and out of terrorism by focusing on the environment from which terrorism has emerged. Alone, British Muslims holding fundamentalist ideas present less of a threat to British national security than those who are organised.

In an attempt to provide a significant new insight regarding the phenomenon of terrorism carried out by British Muslims, this researcher has undertaken primary

⁵ I. Janis, ‘Groupthink’, *Psychology Today*, vol. 5, no. 6, 1971, pp. 43–46, 74–76; W. Park, ‘A review of research on Groupthink’, *Journal of Behavioural Decision Making*, vol.3, no. 4, 1990, pp.229–245.

empirical research. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with elite individuals known to have first-hand experience of investigating, researching and responding to acts of terrorism carried out in the UK.⁶ Supplementing this rich source of information, an archive of literature published by fundamentalist groups before the turn of the century has also been examined. Written before the introduction of terrorism laws preventing the dissemination of extremist literature, this archive provides a unique insight regarding the politics of those British Muslims who would later support and carry out acts of terrorism. Data collected and analysed over a twelve-month period has allowed this researcher to offer a unique narrative that contributes to the explanation of the post 2003 wave of domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims predominantly born and raised in the UK. Due to a statistically small population size of convicted terrorists in the UK, it was quickly determined that methodologically, a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach would be the most appropriate means in which to address the central and sub-research questions detailed below on page 63. Scholars have widely argued that a qualitative methodology allows a far deeper insight while at the same time placing greater emphasis on the participant's view of the world.⁷ It should be noted that when studying political violence carried out by small groups, White has argued researchers should triangulate both a quantitative and qualitative approach.⁸ Although adopting this recommendation may be possible when examining terrorism from a global perspective, the data-set of convicted British terrorists is arguably too small to enable any kind of quantitative analysis.⁹

Formally this thesis adopts an interpretivist methodology which is particularly suited to answering research questions that deal with a sensitive subject, one that is notoriously difficult to explore due to the closed world in which it exists. In this study, the socially constructed world of terrorism has been understood and explained through an examination of how it has been interpreted by its participants. Given the

⁶ A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008

⁷ Bryman *Social Research Methods*

⁸ R. White, 'Issues in the study of political violence: Understanding the motives of participants in small group political violence', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2000, pp. 95-108

⁹ J. Mahoney and G. Goertz, 'A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research', *Political Analysis*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2006, p.246

nature of the research subject, it was clearly not possible to engage in any kind of formal observant participation. Historically, researchers and journalists have interviewed members of certain groups proscribed by the United Kingdom as terrorist organisation for example, Hezbollah and Hamas. However, British Muslims who participate in acts of terrorism do so on an *ad-hoc* basis. In contrast with the IRA, there are no on-going negotiations, British Muslims do not appear on camera wearing balaclavas and making demands. Cells form, plot their operation and then either succeed - in which they become martyrs - or else Police disrupt the operation and conspirators go to prison.¹⁰

In order to understand motivation, the researcher sought to conduct interviews with individuals convicted of terrorism offences in the UK. Consequently, the researcher attempted to communicate with twenty-five inmates currently incarcerated in Prisons across the UK. Letters sent to convicted terrorists were returned undelivered. Notes attached explained why the Prison governor had declined to allow the prisoners to enter into any kind of correspondence. Despite lengthy appeals, it was ultimately not possible to gain direct input from those persons upon whom this researcher has sought to investigate. Such an outcome was perhaps to be expected and, on reflection, it must be acknowledged any answers given by a convicted terrorist may not have been reliable. Reports published by the Justice Department suggest radicalisation in prison is now an established reality. British fundamentalist Muslims inside HMP Belmarsh are known to recruit, convert if necessary and then aggressively radicalise fellow inmates. If these men were to have been interviewed by the researcher, it is entirely likely they would have given a well-rehearsed set of answers that did not necessarily reflect their true motivation.¹¹

Consequently, in order to gain an insight into the views of persons convicted of terrorism, this thesis relies predominantly on public source information combined with a private archive of court transcripts. Specifically, the researcher makes use of transcripts obtained from covert audio surveillance, martyrdom videos and testimony

¹⁰ P. Davies, 'Spies as Informants: Triangulation and the Interpretation of Elite Interview Data in the Study of the Intelligence and Security Services', *Politics*, vol. 21, no.1, 2001, pp.73-80

¹¹ J. Aberbach and B. Rockman, 'Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2002, pp. 673-676; K. Goldstein, 'Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2002, pp. 669-72

given at trial by those convicted of terrorism. The court transcripts run to almost 30 thousand pages and concern five major terrorism conspiracies pursued between 2003 and 2006. The UK government proved unwilling to make this record available despite the fact that court proceedings are conducted openly. Ultimately, these records were obtained privately from the United States by a somewhat circuitous route. These records are not easily available to other academics, but this archive of transcripts contains a vast amount of information concerning radicalization, jihad, the practice of militant Islam and the overall operational cycle of terrorist cells in the UK formed by British Muslims since 2003. In order to supplement the court transcripts and archives with additional material presented during the criminal trials, the researcher made formal applications to the Ministry of Justice to interview prisoners directly, examine multimedia shown to juries and lastly to interview judges that have dealt with cases of terrorism. Despite extensive correspondence and appeals, requests for information and access to both the Ministry of Justice and the Crown Prosecution Service failed to grant approval. The appeal panel ruled it was not possible to easily distinguish between material the Judge had allowed in open court, and material he had deemed private and never to be reported in the public domain. The consequence of this finding is that there exists an entire archive of audio recordings, video recordings and other important trial exhibits that researchers do not have access to.

As part of the data collection phase, the researcher attended the trial of three men accused of major terrorism offences. A cursory examination of extant literature suggests no other academic writing on the subject of British terrorism, has ever sat through a criminal trial in the UK. Instead, they have relied on media coverage, allowing the reporter to decide what evidence is important enough to be added to the discourse. Over a three-month period, observations were made of the evidence presented from both prosecution and defence. This invaluable experience provided a significant insight concerning how cells form, train, gain finance and ultimately plot acts of terrorism against the UK. Combined with the archive of court transcripts made exclusively available to the researcher by a private third party and interviews with two former home secretaries, this study can arguably claim to stand out amongst competing literature since the body of empirical material that has been surveyed is both unique and formidable. The Rt Honourable David Blunkett and Charles Clarke held the office of Home Secretary at a time when domestic acts of terrorism were being carried out by British Muslims. The researcher interviewed both of these

individuals and each offered extensive accounts of what the government knew at the time of various terrorist attacks and how it sought to respond to this relatively new phenomenon.¹²

During three months of attending terrorism trials, the researcher made connections with a number of leading journalists who regularly report on terrorism cases. Several agreed to an interview with the researcher thereby giving a longitudinal account of terrorism. Input provided by these journalists helped challenge the overall design of this doctoral thesis and drew attention to a number of important questions that remained un-answered in the literature. In addition, the journalists identified shifting trends over the last ten years, in particular, the decline of overseas support in favour of self-starters aided domestically at least by fellow Islamic fundamentalists. Although groups like Al-Qaeda helped fund and direct terrorism against the UK in the years after 9/11, by 2006, the war on terror had significantly eroded the group's capabilities. In November 2013, the trial of the man accused of killing an off-duty Soldier in Woolwich began. Again the researcher attended the trial and made extensive notes that helped shape the overall dissertation. This case in particular highlights the subjective nature of terrorism. Although widely condemned as a terrorist by the media and politicians, Michael Adebajo made no attempt to harm civilian observers. After years spent promoting extreme politics and engaging in activities designed to help re-establish the Caliphate, Adebajo truly believed he was a soldier of Allah, a man fighting another soldier. Intriguingly, on sentencing, the trial judge said the men were extremists but refrained from using the label "terrorist".

Central Dissertation Question

Researchers looking at the overall Muslim community have mainly focused on the impact of counter terrorism policy. Fears have been raised over the role that counter radicalisation programmes may have played in constructing the Muslim community as a threat to national security. An exhaustive literature review has shown that little academic attention has so far been given to the environment upon which convicted

¹² O. Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-probability Sampling', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 40, no.1, 2007, pp 765-772

terrorists socialised before volunteering for suicide bombing. Consequently, the central research question that forms the basis of this dissertation asks:

To what extent has the environment socially constructed through the organisation of Islamic fundamentalist Muslims, incubated and is thus directly responsible for the phenomenon of British Islamic Terrorism since the turn of the century?

Chapters of the dissertation have thus been organised around explaining the rise and importance of the environment termed the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* by the researcher. It is argued throughout the dissertation that the organisation of Islamic fundamentalist Muslims, their extreme politics and the activities members engage in, has been responsible for incubating a mindset necessary for a minority of British Muslims to cross the line from mere Islamic fundamentalists to extreme fundamentalist terrorists.

Sub Research Questions

Seven sub-questions were identified and have helped to structure the thesis chapters:

1. To what extent does the Islamic Faith bare responsibility for act of terrorism carried out by British Muslims?
2. What are the origins of Islamic Fundamentalism and how did it become embedded in UK Muslim communities?
3. To what extent can we define the political ideology of the *Islamic Fundamentalist Movement* and list activities that members engage in?
4. What are the most important factors to explain why British Muslims make the decision to pursue suicide terrorism?
5. How might we define a Standard Operational Cycle that charts the path of a terrorist plot from inception to execution?
6. What assistance do British Muslims receive domestically and from overseas in pursuing an act of terrorism?
7. To what extent has the British Government challenged the organisation, politics and activities of Islamic Fundamentalists in the UK in order to prevent the incubation of terrorism?

Research Methods

Following a qualitative methodology, conversation/discourse analysis combined with in-depth elite, semi-structured interviews have been adopted to answer the CRQ. In terms of available research methods, elite interviews were considered the most suitable method for the study as they provided rich, detailed answers to the research questions while allowing the subjects flexibility in terms of challenging the assumptions of the researcher.¹³ Silke has argued there are a number of advantages of using interviews for gathering data; in particular, they are a flexible method especially in the semi-structured form that dominates terrorism interviews.¹⁴ By following this approach, researchers can probe for additional information when the conversation leads down an unexpected path not originally predicted at the start. Silke has said that interviews have a good response rate and can produce a great deal of extra information, ‘indeed, supplementary information gathered in interviews can be of great value in establishing the wider context’.¹⁵

Denscome has suggested there is a broad consensus across a number of social science disciplines that in order to gain an insight into what motivates a person, qualitative interviews are the most appropriate research method.¹⁶ The conversations analysed here include interviews between terrorist suspects and the police, cross-examinations at trial between defendants and barristers, and covert audio probes used in court evidence. When we say *audio probes*, we are referring to the listening devices secretly placed in the homes of terror suspects by police and the security services. At trial, prosecutors refer to transcripts of the conversations picked up by the devices to show evidence of intent. For example, in the 2006 Liquid bomb plot, the ringleader Ahmed Ali Khan was secretly recorded discussing the prospect of bombing nightclubs and shopping malls. As a primary source of information, the use of covert audio probes is quite novel and raises some interesting methodological questions. Unlike in researcher led interviews and under cross-examination at trial, the subject is not on guard. Since the person is unaware of the listening device, the views they

¹³ Bryman *Social Research Methods*

¹⁴ Silke ‘The Devil You Know’ pp. 1-14

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ M. Denscombe, M, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-scale Social Research*. Buckingham, Open University Press, 2007

express are uncontaminated and offer an invaluable insight into what the person genuinely believes about a particular subject. Again in reference to the 2006 liquid bomb plot, we can reasonably conclude from evidence in the audio probe, that conspirators were indeed willing to kill innocent civilians. This could not be established from court transcripts since all of the defendants denied any involvement in terrorism.

The researcher carried out elite interviews for this study with counter terrorism officers, retired police officers, investigative journalists as well as current and former government policy makers. Interviews began with two senior investigative journalists. Both individuals had at least ten years experience of reporting on major terrorism trials held in the UK. In their responses, the journalists were able to draw upon their vast experience of speaking to friends and family members of those accused of committing acts of terrorism in the UK. Amardeep Bassey gave a particularly rich account of what motivated British Muslims initially to become involved in Islamic fundamentalism and secondly to then cross the line and engage in terrorism. Duncan Gardham has sat through several terrorism trials reporting on the evidence gathered by Police and presented by the Crown Prosecution Service. Over a lengthy period, Gardham has gained a significant insight into the politics of those persons accused of terrorism and the activities they engaged in during the years before volunteering to become suicide bombers.

One of the most important interviews conducted by the researcher involved a discussion with retired spy Omar Nasri. Author of *Inside the Jihad*, Nasri infiltrated Al-Qaeda by attending training camps in Afghanistan during the 1990s. In the UK, Nasri worked undercover at the infamous Finsbury Park Mosque providing the Security Service MI5 with invaluable intelligence on the activities of various fundamentalist preachers. Kindly consenting to a lengthy interview, over a period of two days in Germany, 3rd to the 4th of August 2013, Nasiri explained the motivation behind *Islamic Terrorism* and sought to instruct the researcher on the most important religious issues relevant to British Muslims who become so entrenched in their beliefs they become willing volunteers as suicide bombers. In order to gain a perspective on how counter terrorism police have engaged in the fight against terrorism, the researcher conducted interviews with two former heads of the London MET, Counter Terrorism Unit known as SO15. Although detail was not given on individual cases,

both men provided an important account of how cells formed, underwent training, gained finance and obtained support for their operations.

Providing a more strategic insight, former home secretaries Labour MP's David Blunkett and Charles Clarke were both interviewed by the researcher. It is significant that Clarke had been home secretary at the time of the London Bombings in 2005. As the most senior individual charged with responding to the event, he was able to give an important account of what the government knew at the time and how it reacted in both the short and long term. Given the seniority of these individuals, the time afforded by each of them was only 30 minutes. Therefore, the researcher had to be as direct as possible and keep the interviewee from going off on a tangent to discuss issues that were not relevant to the research questions.

Seven general questions focused the semi-structured interviews with each question related to a specific theme within the dissertation. Given the different roles of participants, it was necessary to tailor questions slightly in order to fit with the potential insight offered by the interviewee. For example, when discussing the difference between jihadists and terrorists, politicians were asked the question from the perspective of government policy, while in the case of investigative journalists, focused turned to what they believed to be the self-perception of terrorists they had reported on. All of the interviews conducted by the researcher were recorded and transcribed. Extracts were then used as evidence in support of propositions that came out of the data analysis phase. Some interviews were far less structured and instead consisted of a free flowing discussion. For example in order for the researcher to gain an understanding of Islamic fundamentalism, Omar Nasiri spent several hours narrating the main arguments in respect of the proposition that Islam bears responsibility for terrorism.¹⁷

In addition to elite interviews, the researcher also analysed an archive of literature published by Islamic fundamentalists towards the end of the 20th century. Due to counter terrorism laws, the websites of these groups are no longer in operation. Consequently, the researcher had to use a tool known as the *Way Back Machine*. This website has periodically archived large sections of the Internet since the late 1990s.

¹⁷ D. Hammer and A. Wildavsky, 'The Open-Ended, Semi-Structured Interview: An (Almost) Operational Guide', *Craftways: On the Organisation of Scholarly Work*, New York, Transaction Publishers, 1989

Given a URL, the database will return an image that webpage as it was at a specific moment in time. This meant that the researcher was able to analyse the politics and activities carried out by Islamic fundamentalists before the government introduced legislation forcing their operation *underground*. The beliefs held by members of these groups and activities they engage in have changed little over time. Despite the introduction of the terrorism acts 2000 and 2006, Islamic fundamentalists in the UK continue to engage in and thus be convicted of terrorism offences.

Qualitative research should be assessed on trustworthiness and authenticity rather than validity and reliability.¹⁸ The study aims to be maximally reflexive, that is to say the researcher has sought to examine discourse as objectively as possible. In order to evaluate this authenticity of the study, chapters have been reviewed by individuals working in counter terrorism as well as by persons who represent the interests of convicted terrorists. Interview data has been fully transcribed and copies sent to the interviewee for confirmation before extracts were then used during the write up of the dissertation.

Sampling

The researcher sought out the most knowledgeable persons in respect of the research subject. In total, ten out of thirty potential elite interviewees agreed to participate. As the interviews progressed it quickly became clear the respondents were consistently highlighting similar themes with their answers. By the end of the data collection phase, the researcher had clearly reached a saturation point in consideration of the answers provided. Key themes quickly emerged that were then subsequently used to determine the chapter headings.¹⁹

¹⁸ E. Guba and Y. Lincoln, 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, (eds), Sage, Thousand Oaks, 1994, pp. 105-117.

¹⁹ See the discussion of sampling in L. Epstein and G. King, 'The Rules of Inference', *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 69, no.1, 2002, pp. 1-209

Procedure

From a review of the available literature, the researcher identified individuals likely to provide a useful insight regarding the research questions. Those persons working in counter terrorism and those responsible for national security at the government level were considered the highest priority. Roughly, thirty individuals ranging from politicians to journalists were short listed and contacted either informally through the researchers social network or formally through letter/email. Two thirds of respondents politely declined, one third however representing a cross section of the domain experts agreed to be interviewed. Those individuals who agreed to be interviewed were met by the researcher at a suitable location and asked to sign a consent form. A record of the interviews was maintained and the process of analysis documented in detail. Transcripts of the interviews were produced and copies sent to the interviewee to confirm they accurately reflected the conversation.²⁰ In order to gain interviews with Charles Clarke and David Blunkett, the researcher made contact with a local MP who then facilitated access.

Data Analysis

The same interviewer conducted all interviews in order to reduce any impairment to the validity and bias of the research.²¹ To ensure the collected data was accurate, interviews were fully transcribed from the Dictaphone and a copy sent to the interviewee for approval. Themes identified through thematic analysis of the transcripts allowed the researcher to construct chapters that would ultimately form the basis of the dissertation. Within each chapter, the researcher has used extracts from interviews in order to construct propositions and draw conclusions. With respect to the archive of fundamentalist literature, again the researcher sought to construct a set of themes relating to the politics and activities associated with those individuals responsible for publishing the material.

²⁰ N. Mays and C. Pope, 'Rigour and qualitative research', *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, vol. 311, no. 6997, 1995, pp.109-112

²¹ Bryman *Social Research Methods*

Ethics

Dilemmas in respect of ethics are inherent across the entire design, implementation and reporting of an ethnographic study. British Muslim communities are widely accused of acting as 'breeding grounds for terrorism'. Immediately after the murder of a soldier in Woolwich in May 2013, a significant backlash occurred against places of Islamic worship. This researcher has therefore remained conscious of the potential impact research into Islamic fundamentalism may have on the Muslim community. While it is important to conduct research on terrorism, one must avoid unnecessary conflation of Islam and terrorism. The Muslim community consistently rejects persons convicted of terrorism offences who offer the mendacious claim to be acting under the banner of Islam. Complete transparency in respect of the central thesis and project aims were necessary when inviting persons to participate in this study. Where requested, the researcher has strictly observed anonymity of interviewees. Methods to maintain confidentiality and informed consent, and avoid harm and deception formed the basis of this study. Given the sensitive nature of the research subject, participants were clearly informed about the overall research thesis and the themes that formed chapters of the dissertation. Formally, the researcher ensured regular consultation of both the ESRC guidelines and Warwick University Ethics Committee guidelines to ensure the research was being conducted to the highest possible standards. Furthermore, the researcher's regular consultation with the PhD supervisor ensured no activity was undertaken that might in any way be considered unethical. Although the determined effort to correspond with convicted terrorists proved unsuccessful, the researcher spent a great deal of time considering the ethical issues surrounding such interaction.

Contribution to Literature

In seeking to explain why British Muslims are motivated to commit acts of terrorism, scholars have propositioned a variety of explanatory causes. One particularly well-rehearsed theme after 9/11 has been to adopt a top-down approach to understanding

the onset of radicalization as a form of “brainwashing”.²² Writers have argued that international terrorist groups have sent operatives to the UK with orders to form terrorist cells amongst the milieu of fundamentalist Muslims. Rejecting any suggestion that cells are randomly constructed from indoctrinated Muslims, other researchers suggest radicalization since 9/11 has been entirely bottom-up and point to the importance of lone wolves and self-starters. Academics suggest the motivating factors behind these “homegrown terrorists” include the western occupation of Islamic countries, support for oppressive regimes²³, identity issues²⁴, poor political and socioeconomic integration²⁵ as well as individual psychological factors²⁶. Notwithstanding these elements contribute to the process of radicalization; none comprehensively recognize the role of the social environment from which they emerge. In particular, how important the process of socialization amongst inhabitants is for encouraging a minority to cross the line and pursue terrorism.

So far, the debate on the importance of the environment inhabited by terrorists has been largely impressionistic, constructed around anecdotal evidence. By contrast, this doctoral study adopts an in-depth qualitative approach that charts the route taken by British Muslims from initial involvement with Islamic fundamentalism (adopting extreme political narratives, pursuing illegal activities) to developing the mindset necessary to cross the line and volunteer for terrorism. This research project has been completed at a time when the threat to British national security has been raised to severe. Legislation enacted since 11th September 2001 is no longer considered sufficient to tackle the threat posed by the radicalization of British Muslims who are now travelling to Syria to fight alongside the Islamic State. In September 2014, calls were made for British Muslims who fight overseas to be stripped of their passports.

²² M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel*, Boulder Colorado, Lynne Rienner, 2003; C. Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002; Q. Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, Bloomington Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2003

²³ R. Pape, *Dying To Win*, New York, Random House, 2005

²⁴ A. Choudhury, *The Universal Paradigm And The Islamic World-System*. Hackensack NJ, World Scientific, 2007; O. Roy, *Globalized Islam*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004

²⁵ F. Buijs and D. Froukje and A. Hamdy, *Strijders Van Eigen Bodem*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2006

²⁶ J. Victoroff, 'The Mind Of The Terrorist: A Review And Critique Of Psychological Approaches', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2005, pp. 3-42

To British fundamentalist Muslims, jihad is an obligatory activity placed above all others. In the majority of cases, it does not necessarily serve as a precursor to terrorism. Certainly it is not true that every British Muslim who has fought in Syria presents a terrorist threat to the UK. Therefore, before any new legislation can be introduced, it is paramount that policy makers fully understand the environment from which these volunteers are emerging. Government must ensure the right strategy is adopted, one that does not alienate young Muslims and cause more of them to immerse themselves in Islamic fundamentalism which may one day lead them to commit acts of terrorism.

Chapter One - Islam, Fundamentalism, Moderation and Terrorism

The first chapter of this doctoral thesis introduces four relatively complex topics. Individually and collectively, these concepts provide the basis in which to understand the relatively modern phenomenon in which British Muslims have pursued acts of domestic terrorism in the UK. At the heart of this discussion lay the Islamic faith. Over one and a half billion people worldwide currently observe a religion that emerged in 7th century Saudi Arabia.¹ Without prejudice to the overwhelming majority of Muslims, no rigorously honest debate concerning “Islamist terrorism”, may legitimately neglect the importance of religion. It is generally accepted that Muslims who volunteer for suicide bombing find motivation to act based partially on the prospect of divine rewards.² The first section of this chapter therefore goes right to the heart of the problem by asking the controversial question of whether Islamic doctrine instructs violence against civilians.

To understand the 2005 London bombings, at least a basic comprehension of Islam is required. In fulfilment, the first section of this chapter introduces tenets central to the faith. Having considered the largely uncontested elements of Islam, the chapter then turns its attention to the socially constructed dichotomy dividing Muslims into fundamentalists and moderates. While the latter typically reject violence in its entirety, the former strongly reserve the right to defend co-religionists, their faith, and historical Muslim land from aggression and occupation. Fundamentalists argue they have a moral and divine responsibility to protect fellow Muslim, an obligation equitable to that observed by sovereign states and their domestic citizens.

Since the mid 1990s, fundamentalists have organised themselves into a de-facto socio-political movement. Strict obedience to the core principles of Islam provided the basis for mobilisation. The central thesis running throughout this

¹ Pew Research Centre, *Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population*, Washington, 2009, pp. 8–9, 17–19.

² D. MacEoin, ‘Suicide Bombing as Worship Dimensions of Jihad’, *Middle East Quarterly Fall*, 2009, pp. 15-24; Staff Reporter, ‘Suicide bombing: Desperate tactic’, *BBC News Online*, 13th July 2005, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22290927>, (accessed 15th September 2014)

dissertation is that British Muslims responsible for acts of terrorism emerged as a direct consequence of this environment. Specifically, the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* (IFM) incubated the contemporary wave of post IRA terrorism that began in the UK around 2003. By immersing themselves in extreme political narratives and by carrying out activities aligned to re-establishing the Caliphate, a minority of fundamentalists developed the necessary mindset to pursue terrorism. Underlying the central thesis of the dissertation, this chapter argues for mainstream adoption of the term *Islamic fundamentalist extremist terrorism*. This term adequately captures the religious and extreme nature of domestic terrorist conspiracies carried out in the UK since 2003. Concomitantly, *extreme fundamentalists* denote those British Muslims who have transgressed from merely pursuing jihad, to actively constructing improvised explosive devices designed to kill themselves and fellow citizens.

The relationship between Islam and terrorism

Former agent of the British and French security services, Omar Nasiri, strongly contends that terrorism is an inescapable consequence of Islamic doctrine.³ Drawing upon his many years spent infiltrating Al-Qaeda, Nasiri argues the post 9/11 wave of terrorism witnessed in the UK originates from the fundamental principles of Islam. Supporting this proposition, Nasiri highlights several verse in the Quran, for example, ‘I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them’.⁴ A rigorously honest, intellectual consideration of Nasiri suggests he is neither disingenuous nor easily dismissed. To concur with him however, draws attention from Islamic apologists and invites accusations of Islamophobia. Historically, condemning any religion, Islam or otherwise, has been strictly taboo within academia, politics and mainstream media. Consequently, it has been difficult to establish any kind of popular narrative in which the blame for terrorism carried out by Muslims, is levelled squarely at the Islamic faith. Despite compelling evidence that suggests volunteers for suicide bombing invariably hold deeply religious beliefs and frequently claim to be acting in accordance with their faith, politicians invariably denounce terrorists as warped and

³ Author interview with Omar Nasiri, Germany, 3rd/4th August 2013

⁴ Quran (8:12); Nasiri *Author Interview*

misguiding rather than as fundamentalist Muslims. In challenging the orthodoxy, this chapter places Islam on trial. It asks whether violence against non-combatants is entirely the fault of what is found in the Quran and the Hadiths. While Allah may indeed be merciful, British Muslims who deliberately target unarmed civilians are certainly not.

Suggesting that Islam promotes terrorist violence to a greater degree than other Abrahamic religions routinely attracts denunciations of Islamophobia. Consequently, politicians, scholars, and religious leaders are at pains to deflect blame away from Islam. Government ministers appear reluctant to speak out publically against the relationship between Islam and terrorism due to the fear of being denounced as either right-wing or Islamophobic.⁵ In defending Islam and the Muslim community, western leaders routinely suggest violence targeting innocent civilians stems from a distorted interpretation of religious doctrine. They allege that terrorists selectively cite the Quran and Sunnah out of context.⁶ For example, responding to the attack on a Kenyan shopping mall in 2013 which led to the death of three British citizens, Prime Minister David Cameron told reporters, ‘These appalling terrorist attacks that take place, where the perpetrators claim they do it in the name of a religion, they do not’.⁷ The group behind the attacks, Al-Shababb, faced accusations of hijacking Islam in order to elicit sympathy and gain legitimacy and finance for their organisation. Some critics suggest suicide bombers are brainwashed into helping their sponsors achieve political objectives, aims that have little to do with the core principles of Islam. Point of fact however, many of the political goals of terrorist groups like Al-Shababb and Al-Qaeda are also religious goals, for example re-establishing the Islamic Caliphate fits in both categories.

While the British government may not publically blame Islamic doctrine for the London bombings, counter terrorism policy instigated after the event suggests

⁵ G. Owen, ‘Tony Blair Says Murder of Lee Rigby Proves ‘there is a Problem within Islam’’, *Daily Mail Online*, 2nd June 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2334451/Tony-Blair-says-murder-Lee-Rigby-PROVES-problem-Islam.html>, (accessed 19th September 2014)

⁶ Author Interview with Charles Clarke, London, 2nd October 2013 and David Blunkett, London, 9th October 2013

⁷ Staff Reporter, ‘Three Britons among Kenya shopping mall attack dead’, *BBC News Online*, 23rd September 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24195825>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

otherwise. Since 2005, there has been increasingly draconian counter-terrorism legislation and broad counter-radicalisation strategy that has targeted the Muslims community at large. Critics allege new politics have constructed the entire UK Muslim population as a threat to national security despite the relatively small number of potential terrorists amongst them.⁸ In 2011, police installed a network of closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) across predominantly Muslim areas of south Birmingham.⁹ Although never turned on, blanket surveillance of locations considered hotspots of radicalisation, Theresa May has projected the concern that all Muslims hold the potential to cross the line and pursue acts of domestic terrorism.

The Islamic faith is accustomed to detractors who seek to problematise its relationship with terrorism.¹⁰ Many respected observers in a variety of domains have asked whether Islamic doctrine, in particular, the right of self-defence, is compatible with the western concept of a nation state. In particular, whether or not it challenges the monopoly of violence held by the incumbent government. While historically the Christian church enjoyed significant influence over the European aristocracy, after the reformation, religious leaders ceded responsibility for defending the state to policy makers. Within Islam, there can be no separation between Church and State. Unable to ignore the growing pervasiveness of “Islamic terrorism” that culminated in the 2005 London bombings, the British government has since sought to dichotomise Muslims into *moderates* and *fundamentalists*. Former US President George Bush laid

⁸ D. Casciani, ‘Prevent extremism strategy stigmatising’, *BBC News Online*, 30th March 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8593862.stm>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

⁹ Staff Reporter, ‘Birmingham project champion ‘spy’ cameras being removed’, *BBC News Online*, 9th May 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-13331161>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

¹⁰ J. Rojas, ‘Britons afraid to challenge radical Islam, says former Obama adviser’, *The Telegraph Online*, 15th March 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9932108/Britons-afraid-to-challenge-radical-Islam-says-former-Obama-adviser.html>, (accessed 29th September 2014); G. Traufetter interviews H. Ali, ‘Everyone is afraid to criticise Islam’, trans. C Sultan, *Spiegel Online International*, 6th August 2006, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/spiegel-interview-with-ayaan-hirsi-ali-everyone-is-afraid-to-criticize-islam-a-399263.html>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

the foundations of this division in the aftermath of 9/11 when he warned Muslims around the world, ‘you are either with us or you are with the terrorists’.¹¹

Throughout ten years in office, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair consistently defended Islam. Responding to the increasingly violent threat posed by British Muslim terrorists, Blair denounced them as apostates with little understanding of the religion they claimed to represent. Consequently, the Labour government held the view that terrorists operated on the periphery, enjoying little support from the wider Muslim community. In turn, strongly disliked but tolerated, fundamentalists enjoyed relative freedom to operate on the condition there was to be ‘no blood on British soil’.¹² Many so called “hate preachers” later prosecuted as terrorists, initially served as agents of the security services. Notorious Muslim cleric Abu Hamza Al-Masri has claimed that between 1997 and 2003, he met with police and MI5 at least nine times. Whitehall officials have confirmed this to be true.¹³

Since leaving office in 2007, Blair has increasingly levelled blame for Islamic terrorism on a much more broad level of support amongst the Muslim population. Shifting from his tolerant position while Prime Minister, Blair has argued for greater recognition of how Islamic fundamentalism helps foster an environment conducive to terrorism. Responding to the killing of soldier Lee Rigby, and in direct contrast with David Cameron, Blair claimed that, ‘at the extreme end of the spectrum are terrorists, but the world view goes deeper and wider than it is comfortable for us to admit. So by and large we don’t admit it’.¹⁴ In a 2013 interview with the BBC, Blair stated that

¹¹ G. Bush, ‘Address to a joint session of congress and the American people’, 20th September 2001, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

¹² Clarke *Author Interview*

¹³ J. Slack & D. Bates, ‘How spies and police courted Abu Hamza: Twelve secret meetings revealed as sobbing hate cleric tells New York court how his hands were blown off in Pakistan’, *Mail Online*, 9th May 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2623830/How-spies-police-court-hate-cleric-Meetings-revealed-Hamza-sobs-hands-blown-Pakistan-New-York-terror-trial.html>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

¹⁴ Owen ‘Tony Blair Says Murder of Lee Rigby Proves there is a Problem within Islam’

Islam is a “fundamentally extremist” religion.¹⁵ A view he repeated while accepting the “scholar-statesman” award from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.¹⁶ Adding to his initial comments, Blair suggested, ‘We are unable to defeat extremism without defeating the narrative that nurtures it, yet this is problematic because those who adhere to it stretch far broader into parts of mainstream thinking’.¹⁷ Given his knowledge and first hand experience of counter terrorism discourse, there can be little doubt these carefully chosen words were deliberately meant to indict mainstream Islam or at least core principles that are the basis of fundamentalism.

Blair is not alone in raising challenging questions and reaching uncomfortable conclusions. Following the 2005 London bombings, Islam lost much of the insulation that had long protected it from outright criticism. Emancipated from the sphere of right-wing politics, directly criticising Islam became in vogue, both centre-right journalists, and academics were quick to problematise the faith’s core principles. Within this new critically pervasive narrative, Islam is inherently violent and thus directly to blame for terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid, and London.¹⁸ Even before 2005, outspoken atheists have long thundered vociferously against Islam. They routinely highlight how those responsible for suicide bombings seek divine rewards promised to them in the Quran. Terrorists act not merely *in the name of Islam*, but

¹⁵ Staff Reporter, ‘Tony Blair attacks Islam as fundamentally extremist religion’, *Press TV*, 6th September 2013, <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2013/09/06/322446/islam/>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

¹⁶ T. Blair, Acceptance speech for 2010 Scholar-Statesman award presented by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, New York, 6th October 2010, <http://www.tonyblairoffice.org/speeches/entry/washington-institute-for-near-east-policy-2010-scholar-statesman-award/>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

¹⁷ W. Marshall, ‘Blair: Fight Extremism Narrative’, *Progressive Policy Institute Online*, 10th August 2010, <http://www.progressivepolicy.org/issues/blair-fight-extremist-narrative/>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

¹⁸ A. Hlayhel, ‘Is Islam a Violent Religion?’, *Muslim Matters Online*, 21st February 2010, <http://muslimmatters.org/2010/02/21/is-islam-a-violent-religion/>, (accessed 29th September 2014); Staff Reporter, ‘Is Islam inherently violent’, *WND online*, 2nd November 2006, <http://www.wnd.com/2006/11/38666/>, (accessed 29th September 2014); G. Davis, ‘Religion of Peace? Islam’s war against the world’, author and filmmaker Gregory M. Davis rebuts the notion that Islam is a great faith in desperate need of a Reformation

rather more sinisterly, in accordance with its core principles.¹⁹ Publically overt in his hostility to Islam, American author, and outspoken atheist Sam Harris argues that, 'By no stretch of the imagination can anyone argue the core principles of Islam promote non-violence'.²⁰ In terms of their respective views on Islam, Harris, and Professor Richard Dawkins share a great deal of common ground. Their main objective is to wage all out war on religion. Today, individually, and collectively, Harris and Dawkins continue with their mission to convince the world that religion and in particular Islam, are not at all conducive to the good of humanity.

Apologists for Islam have not remained silent in the face of growing hostility. Fighting back against militant atheists, they question their underlying interpretation of the Quran and the Hadiths. Compared to the Islamic terrorists they condemn, Harris and Dawkins are accused of selectively adopting versus in the Quran and Hadiths out of context in order to support generalised propositions. Muslim community leaders point out how men like Harris fail to appreciate how Islam is based on peace and that jihad in self-defence is strictly limited and does not permit Muslims to commit terrorism against civilians. Refuting those who accuse Islam of being at the heart of modern terrorism, British author and Islamic scholar Abdal-Hakim Murad argues that targeting civilians and the act of suicide bombing are foreign to every possible school of Sunni Islam.²¹ Murad believes that both terrorists and those who blame their actions on religion have simply misinterpreted Islamic scripture.

At the time of the London bombings, former politician Charles Clarke served as home secretary. Eight years later, he rejects any suggestion that the fundamental principles of Islam are to blame for the events of 7th July 2005. In fact, Clarke suggests the reverse is true and like many of his peers, deflects blame away from Islam. In his opinion, 'Muslims have been ready to integrate with host communities. More than any other faith, Islam moulds itself to the values of the society of where it

¹⁹ Anonymous, *Palwatch*, <http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=565>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

²⁰ S. Harris, 'Lecture to the New York Society of Ethical Culture', [online video], 2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOpXHtHPZmU>, 03:50, (accessed 18th September 2014)

²¹ 'Islamic statements against terrorism', *Charles Kurzman Online*, 15th March 2012, <http://kurzman.unc.edu/islamic-statements-against-terrorism>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

is'.²² Proponents of this non-violent narrative include the Chief Mufti of Saudi Arabia, a widely respected Muslim scholar, and established authority on Islamic jurisprudence. In a 2004 sermon given at the Hajj, *Abdulaziz Bin Abdalah Al-Ashaykh*, told the vast audience of Muslims gathered from around the world, 'Islam is a religion of peace, mercy and goodness which forbids violence in all its forms especially acts the undermine the security of the innocent'.²³ As a moderate Muslim enjoying life in the west, Murad may simply have been towing the official line when he spoke out. In a similar vein, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia encourages clerics to issue Islamic rulings dictated to them by Washington. However, in the aftermath of 9/11, even hard-line fundamentalist groups historically unsympathetic to the west were queuing up to condemn the perpetrators. Palestinian Hamas, Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood all widely condemned the deliberate targeting of civilians.²⁴ Hardly recognised as pacifists, the decision by these groups to denounce Al-Qaeda, suggests that until the 2003 invasion of Afghanistan at least, even fundamentalists had limits on those deemed fair game.

An idea of Islam

Islam is an entirely holistic faith tightly governing the life of adherents. In contrast with predating Abrahamic faiths, Islam recognised no direct intermediary between Man and God. There is no Christ, Buddha or Judea. Mohammed is the prophet, but he is not worshiped the same as Jesus Christ. The word *Islam* derives from two Arabic words, *taslim* (submission) and *salam* (peace). Those who follow Islam referred to themselves as *Muslims*. Theoretically, there is total peace amongst these persons who literally submit entirely to God. In practice, this has proved difficult to achieve with sectarian violence occurring throughout history and to the present day. Originating in

²² Clarke *Author Interview*

²³ Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Information Office, *Public statements by senior Saudi officials condemning extremism and promoting moderation*, 'Saudi Arabia's Top Cleric Urges Muslims to Reject Terrorism', Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Information Office, May 2004, p. 10, http://web.archive.org/web/20040726235629/http://www.saudiembassy.net/ReportLink/Report_Extremism_May04.pdf, (accessed 29th September 2014)

²⁴ 'Islamic statements against terrorism', *Charles Kurzman Online*, 15th March 2012, <http://kurzman.unc.edu/islamic-statements-against-terrorism/>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

7th century Saudi Arabia, Islam is a strictly monotheistic faith such that God is one, with absolutely no associates. Similar to Christians and the Bible, Muslims submit to a written text. Authentic only when printed in Arabic, the Holy Quran is the absolute, final revelation of God as revealed to the Prophet Mohammed by archangel Gabrielle between 610 CE and 632 CE. Unlike the Bible or the Torah however, early Muslim missionaries passed on the word of god through oral recitation, printed Quran's did not exist. Today, the ability to recite the entire Quran is highly respected; those who can are recognised as Guardians, or *Hafiz*.

Unity of God (Monotheism)

Central to the Islamic faith is the declaration, 'There is no god worthy of worship except God and Mohammad is His messenger'. Known as the *Shahada* (*lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh, Muḥammadun rasūlu l-Lāh*), the phrase must be spoken by reverts to Islam in front of three witnesses. This seemingly short and simple statement has in fact produced vast chronicles of literature agonising over its meaning and implications for centuries. The clearest, indisputable, overarching consequence stemming from the Shahada is an uncompromising acceptance of the proposition that God has no associates. Theoretically, this leads to the rejection of synthetic laws and concepts of secular or monarchical governance since there can be no overarching authority between man and God. A second consequence of the Shahada (reinforced by multiple verses of the Quran) is that Muslims are obliged to hold deeply entrenched hatred towards polytheists (those who worship more than one God). For example, it is a terrible sin and outright apostasy to suggest God can manifest as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – the so-called *Holy Trinity* within Christianity.

The Quran commands Muslims to fight polytheists until they submit. Stating clearly, 'when the sacred months have passed, slay the polytheists wherever you find them'.²⁵ Within the context of International Relations, the "oneness of God" has led to a number of deep-rooted conflicts. War between Pakistan and India has gone on longer than it has between Palestinians and Israelis. This is due to the underlying animosity between monotheist Muslims and polytheist Hindus. All non-Muslims are required to pay alms to the Islamic State on a regular basis. Harris argues this shows

²⁵ Quran (9:5)

that while Allah is merciful and forgiving, it is only to the subjugated.²⁶ He points to the Quran, ‘...nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued’.²⁷

Five Pillars

Those who believe and submit entirely to God must adhere to the *Five Pillars of Islam*. Contrary to misconceptions amongst non-believers, these pillars namely testimony, prayer, alms-giving, fasting and pilgrimage do not include waging war against non-Muslims, subjugating Jews/Christians or forcing anyone to convert to Islam. The Quran is explicitly clear about having no compulsion in religion. Muslims are encouraged to promote Islam peacefully (*Dawa*) and every new follower must have converted by his or her own free will. This right to *choose* Islam is significant and the main proposition made in the seminal publication known as *Milestones*. Studying transcripts from every major terrorism trial in the UK since 2000, reveal consistent references to *Milestones*. Writing in the 1960s, Egyptian scholar Syed Qutb Shaheed argued that Muslims have a divine duty to remove all obstacles preventing humanity from choosing Islam. In practice this inevitable leads to violent revolution against secular nationalists and western backed dictators.

Sunni & Shia

After the death of the Prophet Mohammed, Muslims divided into two distinct sects namely Sunni and Shia. While both generally agree on the central tenets of Islam, they disagreed over the rightful successor to Mohammed as leader of the Caliphate (Muslim Empire). Ultimately the Sunni majority triumphed and Caliph Abu Bakr, a close companion of the Prophet Mohammed, subsequently ruled over the Rashidun Caliphate from 632 CE until his death in 634 CE. It would be an understatement to suggest that Sunni and Shia are staunch rivals. Respected Sunni scholars (predominantly Wahabi) have judged Shia Muslims to be Kuffar (unbelievers) and therefore not actual Muslims. Unfortunately, rivalry is not limited to theocratic

²⁶ S. Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*. London, Free Press, 2005, p. 28

²⁷ Quran (9:29)

disagreement. Sectarian violence between the two major dominations of Islam has resulted in the death of millions of Muslims on both sides. There is no greater example in modern times than the Iran-Iraq war that raged from 1980 to 1988. Over an eight-year period, as many as half a million soldiers died on the battlefield, killed by weapons cynically supplied to both sides by France, Britain and the United States. More recently, sectarian violence in Syria has led to accusations of crimes against humanity. In this revolutionary struggle, the Sunni majority assisted by foreign mujahedeen are engaged in a bitter fight to oust the Shia government of Bashar Al-Assad. Speaking to BBC News in 2013, Iran's Foreign Minister judged sectarian tension between Shia and Sunni Muslims to be the most serious threat to world security.²⁸ If divisions between the two sects were resolved and this led to unification, the west would face a far greater threat to its national security. Historically, divide and conquer has long been the preferred choice for subjugating enemies of the state. Consequently, it serves the interests of major superpowers to fuel hostility between Sunni and Shia.

God's Law (Shariah)

Sharia Law or more commonly just *Sharia* is the moral, religious, and legal code that conditions the behaviour of all Muslims. Although interpretation and the degree of implementation vary between cultures, all Muslims consider Sharia the infallible law of God. It constitutes a system of duties that are incumbent upon all Muslims by virtue of his or her religious beliefs. Sources informing Sharia are naturally the Quran, but also the Hadiths. The Hadiths detail the life of the Prophet Mohammed and provide the basis in which Islamic jurists make rulings on what is allowed (Halal) and not allowed (Haram). The degree to which a Muslim in the west observes Sharia depends upon a number of factors. In areas of London, Birmingham, Leeds, and Bradford, Muslim communities live almost entirely within Islamic enclaves oblivious to the outside world. In the late 1990's, the somewhat derogatory term *Londonistan* described parts of East London that had become indistinguishable from districts of Pakistan.

²⁸ Staff Reporter, 'Iran FM: Sectarian strife is worst threat in world', *BBC News Online*, 11th November 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24893808>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

Residents of *Londonistan* consider themselves Muslim first, British second. Nationality is merely a passport or letter from the home office.²⁹ Friday prayers are largely absent of issues facing the local community such as unemployment, women's rights, and integration. Instead, Imams focus on international politics, specifically events in Iraq, Afghanistan, and more recently Syria. Muslims within these communities are constantly reminded of how they are part of a greater collective, one that transcends state sovereignty, local laws and customs binding a billion Muslims around the world together as a single body. In stark contrast to fundamentalist living in *Londonistan*, thousands of largely second generation Muslims barely attend Friday prayers, let alone pray five times a day as instructed in the Quran. Sharia is entirely alien to the majority of western Muslims. At the extreme end of the spectrum are Muslims who drink alcohol, deal and use illegal drugs and commit adultery, acts strictly forbidden in the Quran. Of particular relevance is that at least ten per cent of British Muslims convicted of terrorism offences in the UK have a previous history of gang affiliation. Perhaps fearing divine judgement, those with a renewed or virgin adoption of Islam, believe that only the most significant act of self-sacrifice will be sufficient to absolve them of past mistakes.

Theoretically, the ideal situation for every Muslim is to live in a country governed according to Sharia. In practice, this is neither achievable nor necessarily desirable. Muslims fleeing from the Taliban during the 1990's consistently spoke negatively of their experience. Taliban leaders are largely uneducated Pashtun tribesmen with very little understanding of gender equality, progressive politics, democracy or any other "western" concepts. Harsh in their governance, the Taliban were strongly criticised for their strict interpretation of Sharia even by fundamentalists. There is little evidence to suggest that if these men had been better educated, Afghanistan would have thrived economically and stood proudly as a beacon of human rights. In wealthy countries governed by western educated, "liberal" Muslims, where Sharia is also rigorously applied, the experience is equally negative. Continuous accusations of human rights violations in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait for example, widely suggest that Sharia is unsuitable in today's globalised world. Anne-Marie Waters, council member of the National Secular Society argues that

²⁹ Author interview with Amardeep Bassey, Birmingham, 17th July 2014

Sharia is entirely incompatible with western liberalism.³⁰ As an alternative to secular liberal democracy, Islam fails to reflect progress made in governance, science, justice and indeed any other area of human advancement since the enlightenment. The problem lies in the totalitarian nature of Islam, which claims to be a holistic solution to regulate man, society, and the state.

Separation between Church and State

How might we address the question of whether Islam is inherently violent? Firstly, one cannot begin to understand the totality of Islam with a mindset rooted in western concepts of secular liberal democracy, the sovereign state, and citizenship. These synthetic social constructs are entirely alien to the Islamic faith. In part, this is because the principle of separating Church and State is entirely incompatible with the holistic nature of Islam. Instead, Islam is the solution to every problem, as the basis of a political system that touches every aspect of human life from medicine and economics to the welfare system and overall governance.³¹ Many leading observers consider Islam totalitarian in nature, a radical utopian movement closer in spirit to communism and capitalism than traditional religions like Judaism or Christianity.³² Former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, echoed this sentiment when he spoke of his governing party being not socialist, nor capitalist but rather Islamic. Conditioned by centuries of violence driven by Christianity, European countries were correct to remove the Church from the state thereby curbing its homicidal tendencies. Today, fewer than 15% of countries in the world permit religion to have a direct hand in governing the population. The Vatican and Iran being two prominent examples. In Islam, secular governance is simply untenable. For Muslims, accepting secularism would entail ignoring, inactivating or replacing

³⁰ A. Waters gives her argument against Islam being a peaceful religion, Video recording, *Online*, 3rd July 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQjZHFnmADQ>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

³¹ M. Kramer, 'Fundamentalist Islam: The Drive for Power', *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 2, June 1996, pp. 37-49

³² D. Pipes, 'There are no moderates: Dealing with Fundamentalist Islam', *National Interest*, 1995, <http://www.danielpipes.org/274/there-are-no-moderates-dealing-with-fundamentalist-islam>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

dictates from the Quran, contradicting the basic creed of Islam.³³ Thus, we begin to see the difficulties faced by Muslims in seeking to co-exist with non-believers, especially against the rising tide of globalisation in which the world is contracting and borders continuously eroding.

Christianity no longer embraces violence because it has superseded this role to secular government. The United Kingdom maintains a standing army and carries out all manner of violent acts in defence of the realm. Conditioned by structural anarchy, one school of thought within international politics argues that every state in the world must put the interests of its domestic population first. Islam is essentially no different. The global Muslim Ummah is a single body with a shared identity, values, norms, and ambition. Consequently, as a perceived sovereign state, Islam maintains a vanguard in which all Muslims subscribe to a kind of *Islamic Responsibility to Protect* doctrine. Although this concept has no legal status in western dominated International law, consent for acts of self-defence appear in the Quran, specifically verse 22:39:

Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged ... those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying, 'Our Sustainer is God!' For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques — in which God's name is abundantly extolled, would surely have been destroyed.³⁴

Writing in the Journal of Islamic studies, Muhammed Ahmed concludes the scope of self-defence in Islamic law does not confine itself to the defence of state territory alone; rather, it also includes defence of the global Muslim community and the value-system of Islam.³⁵ Consequently, this explains why Muslims from all around the world have flooded to northern Syria in order to fight alongside the insurgent group, which today refers to itself as the *Islamic State* (IS).

Harris rejects any notion that violence within Islam is merely for self-defence. Successful in numerous debates with scholars and theologians, Harris contends that

³³ H. Hathout, *Reading the Muslim mind*, New York, American Trust Publications, 1995, p.51

³⁴ Quran (22:39–22:40)

³⁵ M. Ahmad, 'The Scope of Self-defence: A Comparative Study of Islamic and Modern International Law', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2010, pp. 155-194.

Islam contains the offensive notion of Jihad, which includes an imperative to convert, subjugate, or kill non-believers.³⁶ Snubbing refutations from Islamic apologists, Harris is unrepentant in his belief that ‘those who claim Islam is a religion of peace, have either not read the Quran and Hadiths or are lying about them’.³⁷ Artificial borders drawn centuries ago delineating people according to nationality are entirely alien to Muslims. Islam unites adherents on a global scale transcending international boundaries in direct competition with the sovereign state. Islam has been largely misinterpreted, branded a religion when better understood as a totalitarian ideology. A powerful movement encompassing both Church and State that offers a comprehensive alternative to western dominated liberal democracy. As an entirely holistic solution to global governance, it would be unreasonable to expect Islamic *citizens* not to defend both themselves and their way of life. This is arguably no different to the right of self-defence afforded all states and duly enshrined in the founding articles of the United Nations. Is it not reasonable to conclude that Islam is inherently violent, but no more than western sovereign states determined to spread liberal democracy? Can it be argued that attempts by Muslims to achieve universal adoption of Islam are comparable to attempts by western states to achieve universal adoption of capitalism? Two ideologues that each believes their system constitute the best means in which to achieve peace within world politics.

Terrorise the Enemies of Islam

It is undisputed even amongst moderates that Islam retains the right to self-defence. In concluding this section, the question asked is whether terrorism is a corollary of this core principle. In short, is it correct to argue that terrorism carried out by Muslims is a direct consequence of the fundamental right of self-defence inherent within Islam? In October 2013, Mossah Yousef, oldest son of Hamas founding father and spiritual leader Sheikh Hassan Yousef, gave an exclusive interview to BBC News. Raised in the West Bank and considered a future leader of Hamas, Mossah Yousef offers a first hand account of the relationship between Islam and terrorism. During a heated debate with the presenter, Yousef argues, ‘All the Muslims who follow the God of Islam, interpret Islam as they like, but this does not negate the terroristic and murderous

³⁶ Harris *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* p. 108

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.109

character of Islam which incites people through the Quran to kill people and blow themselves up'.³⁸ Yousef goes on to suggest that Muslims who claim Islam is a religion of peace and compassion do not understand their own religion.

Shortly before undertaking a suicide mission, volunteers (*shahids*), record what they refer to as a living will or *martyrdom video*. In almost every publically available example, the shahid references verses in the Quran that detail cautionary rewards awaiting them in paradise. Several of those men who flew planes into the Twin Towers on 9/11, were educated to degree level in the fields of science and engineering. Highly intelligent with promising futures ahead, these men spent an extravagant amount of time discussing the divine rewards of martyrdom. British Muslim terrorists have also expressed their belief that God would reward them as martyrs by granting a place in paradise. In a 2013, propaganda video for Somali based Islamic insurgent group Al-Shabaab, the British narrator discusses the benefits of suicide bombing. He makes it clear that volunteers 'are not driven by material incitements but rather the cautionary rewards of Allah in the Quran, verses that speak to them directly and incite them to defend their faith and honour of their Muslim brothers and sisters across the globe'.³⁹ Discrediting poverty and psychological theories of suicide terrorism, the narrator also states that volunteers for martyrdom are neither disadvantaged nor psychologically disturbed.⁴⁰

Many authors on suicide bombing reject any suggestion that volunteers are radicalised, indoctrinated or brainwashed. Rather each martyr acquires a sincere appreciation and understanding of the Islamic faith from an honest reading of the Quran and Hadiths. Those who volunteer have submitted entirely to God and accepted wholeheartedly His instructions as laid out in the Quran. Evidence in support of this proposition can be found in the case of western Muslims who readily pursue jihad in Afghanistan knowing they are highly unlikely to return home alive. As humans, we are biologically fine-tuned to nurture and protect our offspring. Consequently, we do not ordinarily expose ourselves to any risk that runs contrary to such programmed compulsion. How then can we explain why British Muslim men with children have

³⁸ Al-Shabaab, *Press Release Issued 19th October 2013* - Transcript of Audio Commentary available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk and video of interview available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Nukc31nJk>

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

consistently volunteered to wage armed conflict in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Libya and since 2010 Syria? Alternatively, why do men with young children readily agree to blow themselves up aboard transatlantic planes and packed commuter trains? The reasons can be found in both the Quran and the Hadiths; put simply, it is the duty of every capable Muslim to defend their faith and co-religionists.

Muslims willing to carry out acts of violence against civilians are in the minority. This is not necessarily because other Muslims disagree in principle with violence or because the Quran forbids it. Nasiri believes that if only for a brief moment, all Muslims around the world felt a strong sense of pride in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.⁴¹ The all-powerful America superpower responsible for the suffering of millions of Muslims through sanctions, military aid, and covert interference experienced a small taste of violence not witnessed since Pearl Harbour. While the moderate Muslim majority choose to compromise with their faith, this does not mean they read or interpret the Quran any differently to those who engage in insurgency or carry out acts of terrorism.⁴² Intellectually honest moderates recognise the right of Islam to self-defence and are not blind to events in Palestine, Iraq or Afghanistan; they simply lack courage to act.

In conclusion, terrorism (defined as the deliberate targeting of non-combatants) carried out by Muslims, gains legitimacy from the core principles of Islam. Consistent with structural anarchy as defined by Hobbs, when facing an existential threat, acts ordinarily forbidden within Islam, become permissible. Ethically this is no different to when Britain and Germany targeted non-combatants in the Second World War or when the United States killed thousands of Japanese civilians using nuclear weapons. Western religions have relinquished the monopoly of violence to the state, were this not the case, then the 2003 invasion of Iraq which violated its sovereignty according to the treaty of Westphalia, may have been judged as religious terrorism. While Islam continues to be branded a mere religion rather than a political ideology uniting a global sovereign state in which all Muslims are deemed citizens, acts of legitimate self-defence will continue to be labelled as terrorism. The next section introduces Islamic fundamentalism and the moderate project. Since it is socially unacceptable to blame Islam directly for terrorism, it has been necessary to

⁴¹ Nasiri *Author Interview*

⁴² *Ibid.*

develop a label to use when justifying policies that ultimately affect all Muslims. Overall, dichotomizing Islam into these two polarised groups appears part of a strategy to prevent the re-establishment of an Islamic Caliphate that might rival western capitalist hegemony.

Fundamentalism

Following our basic introduction to the core principles of Islam, we turn now to a narrow interpretation known as *fundamentalism*. From a modern sense, the label re-emerged within Islamic discourse following the 1979 Iranian revolution. Taking power, Ayatollah Khomeini transformed the idea of re-establishing a global Islamic empire from an unachievable ideal, to a realistic possibility. Until the fall of communism, *fundamentalists* posed the greatest threat to western hegemony. Notwithstanding a clash of civilisations, America relied heavily on fundamentalists to defeat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Financed and equipped by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Taliban leaders who would one day harbour Osama Bin Laden, were very much a creation of the west. However, their beliefs, motivation, ambitions, and driving force derive entirely from Islam.

Consensus across academia suggests that Islamic fundamentalism draws upon an uncompromising interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah. Muslim adherents, strive to live their lives in a manner consistent with that led by Prophet Mohammed during the 7th Century. Experienced journalist Duncan Gardham who specialises in terrorism carried out by British Muslims has said of fundamentalism, ‘on reflection, it appears to be a kind of *back to basics*, a very doctrinaire version of Islam that is generally the domain of Salafism or Deobandism’.⁴³ Controversially, Dr Kathleen Taylor at Oxford University believes religious fundamentalism may be categorised, as a mental illness, and that through therapy, normative moderation is achievable.⁴⁴ Given that Muslims are obliged strictly adhere to the Quran, all must arguably recognize the obligation of Jihad, at the very least in terms of self-defense. This leads

⁴³ Author interview with Duncan Gardham, London, 18th September 2013

⁴⁴ S. Nelson, ‘Religious Fundamentalism may be categorised as mental illness & cured by science’, *Huffington Post UK*, 30th May 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/05/30/religious-fundamentalism-categorised-mental-illness-cured-_n_3359267.html, (accessed 29th September 2014)

to two important questions. Are fundamentalists the only legitimate Muslims? Secondly, can there be such thing as a non-violent Islamic fundamentalist?

According to Islam, God gave his final revelation to Mohammed. In the absence of any further instruction, Muslims consider the Quran to be the definitive word of God. As such, there can be no compromise or modernist interpretation of what it commands. Consequently, only those who follow the exact word of God, pray five times a day, reject polytheism and secularism, and wage Jihad against the enemies of Islam can legitimately claim to be Muslims.⁴⁵ Non-fundamentalists or *moderates* have compromised with their faith in order to live amongst western society. Fundamentalists judge them hypocrites and argue they are no more Muslim than non-believers. This is an important point because politicians will often argue that since suicide bombing is indiscriminate, there is a risk of killing co-religionists. Fundamentalists argue that since moderates are hypocrites, it is entirely permissible to kill them while pursuing legitimate defence of the faith.

Islam does not hold a monopoly on fundamentalism. In fact, the Arabic language has no direct translation of the word. The word can be traced within Christianity; used to describe early 20th century Protestant denominations reacting against the rise of theological and cultural modernism. The spirit of fundamentalism is a rejection of modernist, progressive interpretations of primary scripture and a return to core principles. Surveying fundamentalist movements in the United States, Israel, and the Middle East, we find this description to be largely universal across religions. Former British Home Secretary Charles Clarke believes all faiths have within them groups that are sectarian, extremist, and potentially destructive.⁴⁶ Islam is not unique in this respect. Zionist oppression of Palestinians by their Jewish neighbours, persecution of Muslims in Arakan by “peaceful” Buddhist Monks and the Christian Crusades all amply demonstrate that far from holding a monopoly on fundamentalism, Islamic Fundamentalists are actually rather amateur. Religious leaders from all faiths may openly call for peace, forgiveness, and understanding and while the scriptures of major religions widely discuss such ideals, they do so concomitantly with powerful

⁴⁵ B. Lewis, *Islam and the West*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 64

⁴⁶ C. Clarke, *Royal Commonwealth Society Speech*, 15th November 2006, provided to the author via email correspondence

fundamentalist narratives of war and extreme violence.⁴⁷ Should we therefore be asking whether the core principles of all religions have the potential to lead fundamentalists to pursue acts of terrorism? Is it wrong to single out Islam and accuse it of being inherently violent?

Historically all faiths have inspired acts of terrorist violence against civilians. Today, however, we find that only Islamic fundamentalists continue to promote the ideologically basis, authority, and impetus to fight militarily against enemies of Islam. Islamic fundamentalists subscribe to the theological concepts of divine judgement, rewards for martyrs, and importantly the idea of paradise. Without these tenants that are central to the Islamic faith, it is difficult to understand why fundamentalists would sacrifice their lives or face decades in prison in order to retaliate against the British public. No other religion asks for such dedication from its followers. Politically incorrect but empirically true, we simply do not have young fundamentalist Christians, Jews or Buddhists actively engaged in UK terrorist conspiracies. No level of covert surveillance will uncover Catholic priests instructing fundamentalist members of the clergy to pick up a weapon or help defend co-religionists facing persecution. The same, however, cannot be said of fundamentalist preachers who discuss the suffering of Muslims and from whom a minority have incited terrorism against the west. This researcher suggests Islam is more than a mere religion, rather a powerful totalitarian political ideology that legitimizes terrorism through its inherent advocacy of self-defence. Muslims are told it is their right to defend co-religionists and to remove all obstacles preventing non-Muslims from converting.

It is suggested that not all Islamic fundamentalists support the notion of violence. For example, the socio-political organisation *Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT)* is widely labelled fundamentalist and yet the government has not prevented its operation and members do not routinely face arrest for terrorist offences. Professor of History, Lawrence Davidson has argued the vast majority of fundamentalists are indeed non-violent, much like the average devout Catholic or Protestant. Davidson fails, however, to appreciate that his views are inherently contradictory. Even the most ardent left wing, apologetic reading of the Quran cannot ignore the command to pursue Jihad. Able Muslims must defend Islam using whatever means necessary up to and including

⁴⁷ C. Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*, 2nd edn, London, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008, p. 98

armed conflict. A fundamentalist cannot by very definition of what makes him a fundamentalist, ignore verses of the Quran deemed incompatible with western political thinking. Simply put, a British Muslim is not a fundamentalist without total adherence to the Quran, specifically that which obliges him to volunteer for jihad. In failing to advocate jihad against the enemies of Islam, Hizb ut-Tahrir fails to constitute a fundamentalist organisation. The group are better described as ‘moderates with extreme political views’, which although incompatible with western norms and values, does not make them any kind of terrorist threat.

Earlier in the chapter, discussion centred on whether the problem of Islamic terrorism lies with the fundamentals of Islam. Protagonists of this argument cite a verse in the Quran, which states, ‘Those who believe, fight in the cause of Allah’.⁴⁸ Rebutting the negative connotations this statement implies, Islamic fundamentalists argue that what they do is no more of a problem for international peace and security than what hard-line republicans do when they lead America into illegal wars, or sanction CIA interference in the affairs of Muslim countries. Perhaps the greatest concern to the west is the increasing number of moderates questioning their faith and shifting more towards fundamentalism. This figure rose exponentially after September 11th 2001. In particular, young Muslims who observed the sacrifice made by nineteen Brothers asked what they should be doing for the global cause. If all Muslims rejected moderation, might we witness a genuine clash of civilisations? This was the fear exposed by Samuel Huntington writing back in 1992 as the Cold War ended and fundamentalists emerged out of Afghanistan.

Although well versed in respect of international politics, just war and theories of the sovereign state, Islamic fundamentalists do not attempt to rationalise or legitimise their views or actions from any kind of legal or normative standpoint. The only law that interests them is God’s law and the only legitimacy required derives from the Quran. In fulfilling what they perceive to be a kind of *Islamic Responsibility to Protect* doctrine, British fundamentalists have fought several *Just Wars*: Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990’s, Egypt, Syria and Libya since 2010. British Muslims fighting to establish a moderate Islamic state are revolutionaries. In contrast, fundamentalists who support political groups with an Islamist agenda are terrorists and prosecuted accordingly. This researcher suggests the reason for this disparity is

⁴⁸ Quran (4:76)

that publically at least, western governments refuse to openly acknowledge that Islam has been misbranded a peaceful non-violent, non-political religion, when it is far better understood as a holistic rival to both communism and capitalism.

When constrained as a mere religion, Islam operates within western ideas of secular liberal democracy. Classified as a religion, Islam is immune from direct criticism, thus leading to the moderate/fundamentalist dichotomy. Front stage, the west pushes moderate Islam in order to divert criticism against the American led *War on Terrorism*. Back stage western leaders oppress both moderates and fundamentalists who might otherwise establish an Islamic Caliphate to rival capitalist hegemony. A clear example is Egypt where American military aid has kept the legitimately elected Muslim Brotherhood from office and in Gaza where the Islamic Hamas Party face a constant struggle to govern due to an Israeli blockade. In the face of overwhelming military might, Islamic fundamentalists continue to strive towards unification, devoutly believing Allah has ordained them to one day achieve victory.⁴⁹

Moderates

Promoted as an ideological response to Islamic fundamentalism, the term first described opponents of the post 1979 Iranian regime. Strictly speaking, moderation within the Islamic faith varies, but primarily it describes those Muslims who reject Jihad and embrace western concepts of human rights, democracy and freedom of religion. Writing in the Huffington Post, political observer Qasim Rashid has said that moderate Muslims reject violence because they recognise that “true Jihad is the struggle to attain nearness to God through good works”.⁵⁰ Moderation is the normative interpretation of Islam while divergent fundamentalists require psychological therapy. More recently, moderate Muslims have been popularised as those able to contain their anger and revulsion in response to public insults of the Prophet Mohammed.

Western leaders champion the moderate project for two important reasons. Firstly, it helps delegitimise fundamentalism and secondly, moderates are not pushing

⁴⁹ Al-Shabaab Press Release Issued 19th October 2013

⁵⁰ Q. Rashid, ‘Will the Real Moderate Muslims Please Stand Up?’, *The Huffington Post*, 3rd February 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/qasim-rashid/will-the-real-moderate-mu_b_817600.html, (accessed 29th September 2014)

to establish an Islamic Caliphate that might rival capitalist driven liberal democracy. Political support for moderate Islam has been consistent amongst western nations. For example, shortly after the London Bombings in July 2005, former Australian Prime Minister John Howard held a summit for Muslim leaders. The outcome was a “statement of principles” committing Muslim communities to pursue “moderate Islam”.⁵¹ The Australian government is far less tolerant of fundamentalists and actively undertakes initiatives designed to curtail their activities. Manipulation of the British Muslim community does not appear to have gone un-noticed or without consequences. In 2010, British MP Dr Phyliss Sharkey warned that because of counter terrorism initiatives that began in earnest post 2005, many British Muslims felt the government had sought to engineer “moderate Islam” by promoting certain counter radicalisation groups over others.⁵² The moderate project extends beyond domestic boundaries and appears to have found favour within British Foreign Policy. In discussing peace with respect to Syria in 2013, Foreign Secretary William Hague spoke of how the West needed to ‘bolster moderate opposition in order to exclude fundamentalists from power’.⁵³

Muslim leaders in the UK who promote moderate Islam draw significant criticism from fundamentalist counter parts. Moderates are accused of working on behalf of the government to promote a diluted form of Islam that is at odds with its core principles, in particular the right of self-defence. Observers suggest these so-called representatives of the Muslim community are unable to speak out against western aggression and instead they mutilate the teachings of Islam as a conciliatory gesture to non-believers. Former Jihadist Omar Nasiri has questioned the entire concept of moderate Islam arguing it simply does not exist. He argues, ‘the moderate is someone who drinks alcohol, does not pray and thinks of himself as assimilated into a western way of life and therefore is not a Muslim at all’.⁵⁴ Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan agrees with Nasiri saying, ‘there is only one prophet, and one Allah

⁵¹ A. Aly & L. Green, ‘“Moderate Islam”: Defining the Good Citizen’, *M/C Journal*, vol. 10/11, no. 6/1, 2008, <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0804/08-aly-green.php>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

⁵² Casciani ‘Prevent extremism strategy stigmatising’

⁵³ Staff Reporter, ‘Syria Talk Must Bolster Moderates’, *News Watch Online*, 22nd October 2013, <http://www.hizb.org.uk/news-watch/syria-talks-must-bolster-moderates-says-uks-hague>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

⁵⁴ Nasiri *Author Interview*

and only one Quran, hence there can be only one Muslim. A moderate Muslim is an oxymoron because there is no such thing'.⁵⁵

Consistent with Nasiri and Erdogan, atheist Dr Sam Harris criticises the entire moderate project at length. He argues that religious moderation is a cover for fundamentalist terrorism, because it diverts attention away from Islam itself, for which criticism is taboo. Consequently, it is necessary that governments appear to be at least trying to isolate fundamentalists from the moderates. In practice, however, the need to protect the majority outweighs the human rights of the minority. Subsequently, moderate British Muslims are treated the same as fundamentalists. Government policies designed to counter terrorism invariably add to the construction of the entire Muslim community as a threat to national security. As recently as 2012, police installed security cameras across a large Muslim community of Birmingham. Although never made operational and later dismantled, this activity demonstrates counter terrorism police believe privately as least, that all Muslims in the UK are potential terrorists.

During a 2009 visit to Cairo just before the Arab Spring, President Obama steadfastly claimed the United States is not, and never will be, at war with Islam. Contrary to such public overtures that first began with the Bush administration, extra-judicial drone strikes, financial sanctions, military aid and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan make it difficult for even the most moderate Muslims to refrain from becoming fundamentalists and pursuing Jihad against coalition forces. Fundamentalists point to the military led post Mubarak regime in Egypt, as evidence showing western disdain for Islam and a steadfast refusal to allow even democratically elected fundamentalists to hold power. Despite free elections in 2013, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammed Morsi, was ousted by the American financed Egyptian military within his first year in office. Using the highly subjective cover of pursuing fundamentalists, the west is able to gain public support for activities that invariably target the entire Muslim community. The net result of the *War on Terror* has been to prevent even democratic attempts to re-establish an Islamic Caliphate. Western nations continue to stem the rise of Islam in order to protect capitalist driven liberal democracy. In the next section, we conclude this first chapter by introducing

⁵⁵ A. Amuld, 'Moderate Islam is an Insult to Islam', *My Telegraph*, 22nd June 2013, <http://my.telegraph.co.uk/abduhmuhd/amuhd/1476/moderate-islam-is-an-insult-to-islam-the-cultural-muslim>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

our primary topic, specifically terrorism carried out by a minority of extreme fundamentalists.

Extreme fundamentalist terrorism

Modern day terrorism carried out in the UK since 2003 has been almost the exclusive domain of British born and raised fundamentalist Sunni Muslims. This includes the four men responsible for the unprecedented 7th July 2005 suicide bombing in London. Subsequent enquiries into the attack revealed the extent to which the men responsible all held deep fundamentalist views. Like other British Muslims who have pursued terrorism, these men were actively engaged in promoting political narratives and carrying out activities designed to further their religious beliefs. Since the early 1990's, hundreds of British Muslim men have loosely networked in order to form what this author defines as the *Islamic fundamentalist Movement*. From within this socio-political environment, a minority of those involved have later crossed the line and pursued terrorism. Well established within academic discourse is the proposition that while not all Islamic fundamentalists become terrorists, all Islamic terrorists are principally fundamentalists.

Since 2005, *fundamentalism* has declined in favour of the term *extremism* when referring to British Muslims who commit Terrorism. A survey of relevant discourse suggests the media, politicians, and academia denounces these men as *extremist terrorists*. In part, this is due to the failure of the moderate project to adequately challenge fundamentalism. In turn, this had led to greater use of the word “extremism” to describe more than mere acts of terrorism. Since 2014, policy makers consider fundamentalist Muslims who reject atheism, democracy, and freedom of speech as extremists. W This contemporary descriptive entirely fails to capture the importance of Islam and how terrorists commonly refer to themselves as fundamentalists. Since the killing of Lee Rigby in 2013, the government has broadened the definition of *extremism* in order to clamp down on the politics and activities of fundamentalists. Historically, the only persons considered *extreme* were those who supported the Islamic right of self-defence and refused to condone terrorism. Since 2013, however, *extremism* now refers to any Muslim who rejects liberal concepts such as freedom of religion, democracy, and human rights. In order to adequately capture the religious and political nature of bombing campaigns

undertaken by British Muslims as well as the way in which government has sought to delegitimize any perceived justification, a more accurate label suggested in this thesis would be *extreme fundamentalists*. Acknowledgement is thus given to the deep level of religiosity as well as recognition that we are referring specifically to those fundamentalists who have crossed the line and adopted an extremist standpoint, such that they are willing to carry out acts of terrorism.

Speaking in the House of Commons in 2013, British conservative politician Ken Clarke stated that in the aftermath of 9/11, the government and its international partners were suddenly adapting to a completely new scale and type of threat from *fundamentalist religious extremists*.⁵⁶ Linguistically, this speech demonstrates that within the British Government, politicians deemed Muslims willing to carry out terrorism as both fundamentalists and extremist. In 2008, the National Council of Resistance of Iran submitted written evidence to a select committee on Foreign Affairs. The organisation stated clearly, ‘terrorism has been the main instrument of the Iranian regime in pursuit of its expansionist ideology. Islamic fundamentalism inspired terrorism now poses the greatest threat to peace and stability around the world’.⁵⁷ This statement offers further evidence of how the *fundamentalist* label is widely used amongst policy makers within the discourse on terrorism.

Writing in the aftermath of the 1993 Al-Qaeda terrorist attack in New York, academic Sadik Al-Azm argued in favour of using the term *Islamic fundamentalism* to describe the ideology of those responsible. By referring to the terrorists as fundamentalists, Al-Azm implied the core principles of Islam condoned violence. In advocating the epistemological legitimacy, scientific integrity and critical applicability of the term *Islamic fundamentalism*, Al-Azm points to its liberal use in books, summaries and introductions produced by a prominent Egyptian compiler and editor of armed insurrectionary Islamist publications. He notes how it is ‘used in a

⁵⁶ House of Commons, ‘Transcript of commons debate 19th December 2013’, *Hansard Online*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131219/debtext/131219-0002.htm#13121959000001>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

⁵⁷ Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, ‘Written evidence submitted by the National Council of Resistance of Iran, UK Representative Office’, *UK Parliament*, 2nd March 2008, <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmfaaff/142/142we03.htm>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

very matter of fact way and without further apologies, hesitations or reservations'.⁵⁸ In further support of his contention, Al-Azm cites a widely reported statement issued by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) - the group responsible for the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat in 1981. The author of the statement claims the underlying ideology of EIJ derives from a 'fundamentalist call for a return to the understanding and doctrine of the good predecessors in an age where corruption prevails'.⁵⁹ The group's manifesto states the purpose of the organisation is to, 'show and recall the legitimate religious foundations and fundamentals which should never escape the attention of any Islamic movement'.⁶⁰

Collectively, these statements support use of the term "fundamentalism" to describe insurgent groups which emerged from Afghanistan in the early 1990s. In his final remarks, Al-Azm agrees stating that it is entirely reasonable to conclude that referring to these groups as fundamentalist is both accurate and correct. At a meeting in Cairo in February 1995, three Middle Eastern leaders claimed to have been the target of Islamic fundamentalists. Hosni Mubarak, Yasser Arafat, and Isaac Rabin, stated publically that "Sunni terrorists" had tried to assassinate each of them.⁶¹ This narrative greatly strengthens the proposition that terrorism carried out by Muslims since the early 1990s has emerged from the global *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. More recently, approximately 63% of organisations proscribed by the British government in 2003 can be suitably described as "Islamic fundamentalists".⁶²

Almost exclusively, *extreme fundamentalists* point to the 2003 invasion of Iraq as being their primary motivation. A war deemed illegal even by western standards, fundamentalists judge it a neo-colonialist attempt to secure the country's natural resources. Comments by former American President, George Bush, in which he inadvertently used the word *crusade*, left little doubt the invasion of Iraq was also

⁵⁸ S. Al-Azm, 'Islamic Fundamentalism Reconsidered: A Critique Outline of Problems, Ideas and Approaches', *South Asia Bulletin*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1993, p.96.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ D Pipes, 'There are no moderates: Dealing with Fundamentalist Islam', *National Interest*, 1995, <http://www.danielpipes.org/274/there-are-no-moderates-dealing-with-fundamentalist-islam>, (accessed 9th October 2014)

⁶² Home Office, *Proscribed terror groups or organizations*, UK Parliament, 12th July 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2>, (accessed 9th October 2014)

part of the long running campaign to subjugate Islam and prevent the re-establishment of a Caliphate. As the post-war occupation of Iraq continued to destabilise the country, division occurred amongst British fundamentalist Muslims. While the majority remained bound by a covenant of security, a minority claimed the British Government had broken this peace treaty and were now at war with Islam. Consequently, a small number of fundamentalists in the UK determined that terrorism was now the only way to fight back against the coalition. As a tactic in asymmetric conflict, terrorism empowered those who felt compelled to fight back against western aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan. Muslims with previously no interest in attacking the UK, who abhorred violence against non-combatants, appear to have renegotiated with their ethics. Events in Fallujah, Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib conflated with policies of targeted assassination, extra-ordinary rendition and the most controversial of all “enhanced integration” were sufficient reasons for fundamentalists to begin plotting attacks against fellow citizens.

Terrorists in Northern Ireland typically belonged to well-established paramilitary organisations with access to weapons, explosives, and expert military training. In contrast, British Muslims growing up in the west enjoy little organised logistical support. Through the collective movement of likeminded fundamentalists around the UK, terrorists have been able to rely on others to facilitate introductions and help raise finance. Upon making the decision to act, fundamentalists provided the necessary connections to obtain training and operational support. Until 2007, Al-Qaeda (ALQ) played a significant role in this process. Because of increasing drone strikes, ALQ has significantly declined as a sponsor of terrorism in the UK. In the next chapter, we formally introduce the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. The researcher uses this label to describe the organisation, politics, and activities of British fundamentalist Muslims since the mid-1990s. Tracing the origins of fundamentalism to 1930s Egypt, we show how after a lengthy period of inactivity due to western led suppression, the movement re-emerged in post-Soviet Afghanistan and arrived in the UK shortly thereafter. British Muslims responsible for acts of extreme violence against western hostages during the Syrian civil war are a direct by-product of the UK fundamentalist movement. In September 2014, fundamentalist preachers in the UK who promoted the mindset which led hundreds of British Muslims to join the war in Syria, made a direct plea for them to release one hostage in particular. Controversial fundamentalist cleric Shaykh *Haitham Al Haddad*, a Judge for the Sharia Council in

London, warned that the execution of Mr Henning would be “haram” – forbidden according to Sharia Law.⁶³

⁶³ N. Culzac, ‘UK Imams call on ‘immediate and unconditional’ release of Alan Henning from hands of Isis’, *The Independent Online*, 20th September 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-imams-call-on-immediate-and-unconditional-release-of-alan-henning-from-hands-of-isis-9745735.html>, (accessed 29th September 2014)

Chapter Two – Origins and Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism

Previously chapter one introduced four important concepts namely Islam, fundamentalism, moderation, and fundamentalist extremist terrorism. Critically, the first chapter identified how fundamentalist British Muslims began organising themselves into a socio-political movement relying on a strict interpretation of Islam as the basis for mobilisation. Followers promoted a visceral anti-western political ideology and participated in a set of activities to help entrench their extremist beliefs. Arguably, the most common of which has been the pursuit of jihad. From this group of British fundamentalist Muslims, a minority would later undertake acts of domestic terrorism against fellow citizens. This relatively modern phenomenon has been a direct consequence, indeed championed by the fundamentalist movement. Without incubation provided by this socially constructed environment, neither the mindset nor the operational support necessary for the genesis of terrorism would have materialised.

This second chapter presents the origins and rise of Islamic fundamentalism. This is necessary in order to recognise and challenge narratives that continue to drive young British Muslims to pursue jihad, which in itself offers a pathway towards violent terrorism. This chapter proceeds by examining how fundamentalism first emerged, specifically in response to western neo-colonialism. After a lengthy period of inactivity due to political suppression from authoritarian dictators in the Middle East, fundamentalism re-emerged in post-soviet Afghanistan spearheading by Al-Qaeda. Over the next ten years leading up to 9/11, Islamic fundamentalism swiftly became prevalent in Muslim communities across the UK. In order to explain why this occurred, this chapter argues certain key events helped ensure ideologues for Islamic fundamentalism enjoyed a highly receptive audience in the late 1990s and early 21st century.

The story of Islamic fundamentalism goes back to 1924. Following the abolition of the Ottoman Empire by Turkey's founding father Kemal Ataturk, European powers moved swiftly to divide the vast Muslim nation into fragmented colonies. France, Britain and Spain dismembered what was once a powerful empire into thousands of diverse tribes living in disjointed territories that failed to reflect

religion, race or ethnicity.¹ With over one billion adherents, Islam constitutes a potentially powerful force in world politics. If re-established, a unified Caliphate made up of Islamic republics holds the potential to rival both communism and liberal democracy in vying for global hegemony.² In recognition of this, Islamic fundamentalists have consistently accused both Europe and America of waging cultural and ideological warfare to suppress the dispersion of Islam.³

On the eve of the Second World War, British foreign minister Lord Curzon told Parliament, 'Britain must help put an end to anything which brings about Islamic unity between the sons of Muslims. As we have already succeeded in finishing off the Khilafah so we must ensure it will never rise again'.⁴ While historically western nations have long subjugated the nation of Islam, geopolitics and the pursuit of oil provided an additional impetus to act. By the end of the Second World War, both the United States and Great Britain had thoroughly recognised the importance of energy security. Consequently, from 1945 onwards, both countries began a successful long-term campaign to assist 'puppet dictators' in halting the re-establishing of an Islamic Caliphate. Interference in Muslim countries, however, helped construct the west as an enemy of Islam leading to the rise of opposition movements both secular and religious in nature. The next sub-section describes the "neo-colonialist" approach taken by the west in order to subjugate Islam and thus ensure the continued flow of Middle Eastern oil.⁵

¹ Al-Shabaab, 'Press Release Issued 19th October 2013'. Transcript of audio commentary available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk and video of interview available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fINukc31nJk>

² C. Tripp, *Islam and the moral economy: The challenge of capitalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006. In particular Chapter 5 Repertoires of resistance: Islamic anti-capitalism

³ Al-Shabaab 'Press Release Issued 19th October 2013'

⁴ A. Kareem, 'European colonialists conspired to destroy the Khilafah state', *Khilafah*, [web blog], 3rd March 2007, <http://www.khilafah.com/index.php/the-khilafah/issues/84-european-colonialists-conspired-to-destroy-the-khilafah-state>, (accessed 9th October 2014)

⁵ W. Roger and R. Robinson, 'The imperialism of decolonization', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1994, pp. 462-511

Neo-colonialism secures the oil

In the aftermath of a war against Fascism that was rationalised as a war for freedom and self-determination, allied politicians would now have to compromise with their ethics to ensure the continued flow of oil. Almost bankrupted by five years of war, Britain reached an agreement with the United States over control of Middle Eastern oil. Allegedly in 1944, American President Franklin Roosevelt told the British Ambassador, 'Persian oil is yours. We share the oil of Iraq and Kuwait. As for Saudi Arabian oil, its ours'. Subsequently, on the 8th of August 1944, western superpowers signed the Anglo American Petroleum Agreement splitting Middle Eastern oil between the United States and Great Britain. Such realist discussions leave little doubt as to the contempt held for local leaders and the genuine lack of recognition afforded to Middle Eastern countries in terms of state sovereignty.⁶ Islamic fundamentalists commonly use the western pursuit of energy security to convince fellow Muslims there is a war against Islam and therefore jihad is necessary in order to shake off interference from foreign crusaders.

In essence, neo-colonialism describes the post-UN strategy to secure Middle Eastern oil. Smith has suggested Marxist commentators used the term to denote the continued economic domination of newly 'independent territories by their former imperial overlords.'⁷ Put simply, a means to extract natural resources from a country without actually having to govern it directly. Examples are bountiful. In 1949, Syrian Army Chief of Staff Husni al-Za'im gained power with assistance from the CIA.⁸ During his four months in charge, Za'im approved a pipeline allowing the flow of Saudi Arabian oil to Mediterranean ports, signed peace treaties with Israel and cracked down heavily on communist politics. In 1951, Iranians democratically elected

⁶ Information Clearing House, 'U.S. intervention in the Middle East', *Information Clearing House*, [web blog], 6th November 2004, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article6308.htm>, (accessed 9th October 2014)

⁷ S. Smith, 'The making of a neo-colony? Anglo-Kuwaiti relations in the era of decolonization', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2001, pp. 159-172

⁸ D. Little, '1949-1958, Syria: Early Experiments in Covert Action', *Press for Conversion*, no. 51, May 2003, http://coat.ncf.ca/our_magazine/links/issue51/articles/51_12-13.pdf, (accessed 23rd October 2014)

prominent lawyer Mohammed Mosaddeq as Prime Minister.⁹ Strongly opposed to foreign control, Mosaddeq nationalised the country's oil industry and cut all diplomatic ties with Britain. Heavily petitioned by the Anglo-Iranian oil company who stood to lose millions in revenue, the British and American governments approved a joint MI6-CIA effort to oust the new Prime Minister.¹⁰ By 1954, this led to the return of western friendly Shah of Iran. Mohammed Reza Pahlavi governed until a student uprising in 1979 finally brought an end to western interference and manipulation of the Shia dominated state. Today the process of neo-colonialism continues unabated in Libya, Nigeria, Yemen and Egypt. What Lord Curzon told the British Parliament in 1939 holds true in modern times: western leaders must never allow Muslims to unite and form an Islamic Caliphate since it would challenge their capitalist driven democratic hegemony.¹¹

Determined that the Second World War would be the last global conflict, the victorious allies established a forum known formally as the United Nations (UN). Theoretically, the UN, and especially its Security Council, would act as mediator between conflicting member states in order to prevent escalation towards all out war. Contained within the founding articles of this new leviathan was the right to pursue self-determination. As long as member states refrained from threatening neighbours, they could govern domestically free of external interference. States like India, who achieved independence as early as 1947 employed UN mechanisms to help promote independence for remaining colonial states in Africa, leading to a so-called 'Wind of Change' in the 1960s. As a result, by 1958, the European states enjoyed almost no territory under direct colonial rule in the Middle East region.¹² Moreover, bound by their public commitment to the principles of the UN, western superpowers could no longer subjugate and exploit weaker nations directly through the historical practice of colonisation.

⁹ M. Gasiorowski and M. Byrne, *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 coup in Iran*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2004

¹⁰ M. Gasiorowski, 'The 1953 coup d'etat in Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1987, pp. 261-286

¹¹ D. Little, 'Mission Impossible: The CIA and the Cult of Covert Action in the Middle East', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 28, no.5, 2004, pp. 663-701.

¹² T. Millar, 'The Commonwealth and the United Nations', *International Organization*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1962, pp. 736-757.

Unquenchable desire for oil however, meant that in the post-colonialist era, a new strategy of covert interference evolved. Both the CIA and MI6 assisted dictators favourable to the West into positions of power and more importantly to hold on to it. For example, in the case of Egypt, the authoritarian Hosni Mubarak was far more preferable to British and American politicians than leaders of Islamic fundamentalist groups such as the *Muslim Brotherhood* or *Islamic Jihad*.¹³ Vast amounts of American military “aid” ensured he was able to retain power for 30 years before widespread protest eventually led to his overthrow and subsequent prosecution.¹⁴ Notwithstanding extensive covert action designed to subjugate the nation of Islam, opposition movements continued to act both politically and militarily in campaigns designed to liberate Muslim land from colonial occupiers and establish an Islamic Caliphate.

Shaking off western interference

Roosevelt’s wartime anti-colonialism, bolstered by the establishment of the United Nations, pointed to the decline of the informal European empires in the Middle East.¹⁵ In Egypt, both nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist groups soon emerged to challenge the last vestiges of British occupation, symbolised by residual military bases. Subjugated by neo-colonialism, Muslims turned towards brave, ambitious political opponents who promised reform and an end to western interference. Corruption, however, allowed the west to continue to plunder the Middle East by way of proxy dictators, often referred to as ‘apostate rulers’ by Islamic fundamentalists. Muslim leaders who agreed to co-operate in a deliberate strategy of indirect rule, received covert assistance from western intelligence agencies to both gain power and

¹³ S. Shpiro, ‘Intelligence Services and Political Transformation in the Middle East’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2004, pp. 575-600.

¹⁴ Z. Karabell, ‘The Wrong Threat: The United States and Islamic Fundamentalism’, *World Policy Journal*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1995, pp. 37-48.

¹⁵ J. Sebrega, ‘The Anticolonial Policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Reappraisal’, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 101, no.1, 1986, pp. 65-84.

suppress political opposition from Islamists. Egypt was typical, gaining ‘independence’ as early as 1935, but remaining a puppet state until the early 1950s.¹⁶

Opposition to western interference in Muslim countries began long before the United Nations established the norm of self-determination. Responding to oppressive colonialism, *Arab nationalism* describes the various political groups united in their determination to shake off foreign interference and regain control of natural resources. Concomitant with these predominantly secular nationalists, religious fundamentalist Muslims also began organising into political groups. Perhaps one of the most widely recognised amongst them is the *Muslim Brotherhood (MB)*, which emerged in Egypt in 1928. Rejecting western ideas of liberal democracy, the MB instead favoured establishing an Islamic republic governed according to Shariah Law. Following the example set by MB, several similar socio-political fundamentalist groups soon emerged in neighbouring countries. Collectively they constituted the global de-facto *Islamic fundamentalist movement*, a grass roots collection of Muslims whose protagonists would later transplant their ideology to the UK towards the late 1990s. One particular group *Hizb ut-Tahir*, is alleged to have provided the primary fundamentalist education to British Muslims that have pursued terrorism.¹⁷

The Muslim Brotherhood

In 2014, the British government announced a crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and a network of Islamist groups accused of fuelling extremism in Britain and across the Arab world.¹⁸ This announcement followed an inquiry earlier in the year promoted by concerns that the group disseminated an ideology which encouraged British Muslims to pursue jihad in Syria and Iraq.¹⁹ In founding the brotherhood, Egyptian cleric Hassan Al-Banna claimed to be responding to the wider decline of religion in global politics. Meanwhile, his fundamentalist movement would serve as a vanguard

¹⁶ J. Jankowski, 'The Egyptian blue shirts and the Egyptian Wafd, 1935–1938', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 6, no.1, 1970, pp. 77-95.

¹⁷ For a first hand account of how Hizb ut-Tahir radicalized a generation of British Muslims see E. Hussain, *The Islamist*. London, Penguin, 2007

¹⁸ R. Mendick, 'Downing Street set to crack down on the Muslim Brotherhood', *Telegraph*, 19th October 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/11171979/Downing-Street-set-to-crack-down-on-the-Muslim-Brotherhood.html>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

against decadence and corruption; failures he believed had become synonymous with democracy due to the separation between Church and State. Al-Banna remarked at the time, 'Politics is part of religion and that to impose upon Islam, the Christian separation of loyalties, is to deny its essential meaning and very existence'.²⁰ Al-Banna directed this proclamation towards the British who at the time were in their last decade as colonial rulers of Egypt. Seeking to replace colonialism with an Islamic state, Al-Banna sought to remove foreign occupiers through initially peaceful means.²¹ In order to build support for his ambitions, he began a programme of small charitable missionaries around the country. By the mid 1940's as the Second World War ended, the Muslim Brotherhood had garnered sufficient momentum and popular support to launch an armed insurgency against the residual British military presence. The assassination of Al-Banna in 1949 had little impact on either the organisation he founded or the regional Islamic fundamentalist movement more generally. Due to Al-Banna, Muslim ambitions to live under Shariah continued to gain support and quickly spread to Palestine, Syria and Jordan.²²

In 1952, British colonial rule of Egypt ended following a military coup d'etat led by a group of young Military officers.²³ The Muslim Brotherhood played a supporting role in the regime change and were initially given a free reign as a quasi-opposition movement. Relations soon soured, however, after a failed attempt by the brotherhood to assassinate President Gamal Nasser in 1954. Security forces swiftly imprisoned thousands of supporters forcing the group to move its operations underground. After a lengthy period of internal exile, the brotherhood sought to re-join mainstream politics in the 1980s by disassociating itself with armed violence and forming alliances with other mostly socialist political parties. In 2005, demonstrating either tacit approval of the group's general Islamic fundamentalist ideology or a

²⁰ J. Schanzer, 'A War with Whom? A Short history of radical Islam', *Middle East Forum*, Spring 2002, <http://www.meforum.org/168/at-war-with-whom>, (accessed 9th October 2014)

²¹ B. Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt*, Reading, England, Ithaca Press, 2008

²² M. Shadid, 'The Muslim brotherhood movement in the West bank and Gaza', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1988, pp. 658-82

²³ Staff Reporter, 'Profile: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood', *BBC News Online*, December 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12313405>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

rejection of authoritarian rule, voters enabled the party to secure 20% of parliamentary seats. In response to the growing challenge to his rule, authoritarian dictator Hosni Mubarak introduced 'legal' reforms designed to suppress religious based opposition, thereby again forcing the group and its leaders back on to the fringes of Egyptian politics.²⁴

Popular protests that began sweeping the Middle East in December 2010, eventually led to the overthrow of President Mubarak in February 2011.²⁵ Unarmed civilians utilising social media achieved in a matter of weeks what armed fundamentalist insurgents were unable to satisfy in a generation. Standing in subsequent parliamentary elections, the Muslim Brotherhood rebranded as the 'Freedom and Justice Party' (FJP), secured nearly half the seats in the People's Assembly, eclipsing the earlier performances of independents allied to the movement.²⁶ The following year, Mohammed Morsi, a long-standing leader of the brotherhood, became Egypt's first democratically elected president securing 51% of the vote in elections declared free and fair by international observers.²⁷ After less than a year in office, the US financed Egyptian military ousted President Morsi, accusing him of inciting violence and conspiring with a foreign power.²⁸ Following the coup, Egyptian authorities arrested thousands of supporters, sentencing hundreds either to death or a long prison sentence.²⁹ At the same time the post-coup military regime banned the Muslim brotherhood whom they now designated a terrorist organisation.

²⁴ J. Stacher, *Adaptable Autocrats: Regime Power in Egypt and Syria*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012

²⁵ C. McGreal and J. Shenker, 'Hosni Mubarak resigns and Egypt celebrates a new dawn'. *Guardian*. 11th February 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/11/hosni-mubarak-resigns-egypt-cairo>, (accessed 24th October)

²⁶ Staff Reporter 'Profile: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood'

²⁷ I. Black, 'Mohamed Morsi victory is a landmark for Egypt – but a qualified one', *Guardian Online*, 24th June 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jun/24/mohamed-morsi-victory-landmark>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

²⁸ B. Wedeman and R. Sayah and M. Smith, 'Coups topples Egypt's Morsi; deposed president under house arrest'. *CNN*, 4th July 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/03/world/meast/egypt-protests>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

²⁹ L. Noueihed, 'Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Badie jailed for life in Egypt'. *The Independent*, 15th September 2014,

Islamic fundamentalists decried the actions of the Egyptian military, citing pressure from Israel and the United States as the overarching catalyst. Leading observers argue the brotherhood renounced violence as a means of political change decades ago and that it had been ‘robbed of political power won fairly at the ballot box’.³⁰ The message to Islamic fundamentalists was that even if they gained power according to western ideals of democracy, fears of an Islamic Caliphate would inevitably prevent them taking office. Consequently, this untenable situation adds weight to the claims made by preachers in the UK, specifically that combative jihad and if necessary terrorism, presents the only realistic means of gaining and securing power in the world today. Extreme brutality witnessed in Syria at the behest of ISIS, is arguably the result of western nations failing themselves to abide by what they publically advocate in terms of democracy and non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states.

Hitz ut-Tahir

British Muslims, who have later gone on to engage in acts of terrorism, have in many cases, gained their political and religious education from Hitz ut-Tahir (HUT).³¹ The group’s primary objective is the unification of all Muslim countries into a single Islamic caliphate governed according to Sharia Law. In contrast with more overtly political groups such as the now banned Al-Muhajiroon (ALM) and its successor Islam4uK, HUT remains stubbornly influential, continuing to attract new members around the world and in particular the UK. There are several reasons that may explain this. Firstly, HUT lacks charismatic individuals such as Anjem Choudary who court media attention thus inviting a clampdown from government. Secondly, HUT strongly advocates against the use of violence in order to re-establish the Caliphate. Consequently, community leaders and parents are less inclined to discourage young Muslims from joining the organisation the same way the might with ALM. Palestinian Shariah Court Judge, Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, instituted this trans-national Islamic

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/muslim-brotherhood-leader-mohamed-badie-jailed-for-life-in-egypt-9734430.html>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ M. Whine, ‘Islamist recruitment and anti-Semitism on British campuses’, *RUSI Homeland Security & Resilience Department Workshop*, 23rd January 2006, <http://www.thecst.org.uk/docs/RUSI%20Homeland%20Security.doc>, (accessed 9th October 2014)

fundamentalist movement around 1953 in Al-Quds (Jerusalem) within Jordanian controlled Palestine. Five years prior, Israel declared independence. This act in 1948 remains unrecognised by the Palestinians; the majority of whom continue to seek liberation from what they perceive to be a Jewish occupation of their land.

Primarily, Nabhani focused his attention on Israel. However, the vision put forth in the group's manifesto was that HUT would serve as 'an Islamic vanguard dedicated to liberating all of the Arab Muslim countries from the impact of Western colonialism'.³² In a clear rejection of modernism, today the group remain true to their original philosophy stating on their website:

Revive the Islamic Ummah from the severe decline that it has reached, and to liberate it from the thoughts, systems and laws of Kufr (non-believers), as well as the domination and influence of the Kufr states. It also aims to restore the Islamic Khilafah State so that the ruling by what Allah (swt) revealed returns.³³

A consistently debated issue between HUT leadership and their detractors concerns whether the proposed caliphate would later seek to conquer non-Muslim states and subjugate all non-believers under Islamic rule. Writing in 2007, the leader of HUT in the UK, Dr Abdul Wahid, responds to allegations by MP David Davies, accusing him of recycling false allegations concerning the future intentions of their proposed Caliphate.³⁴ Despite his protestation to the contrary, on the group's website in the section entitled *The Aim of Hitz ut-Tahir*, it is clearly stated that 'the Muslim nation will return to her rightful place as the first state in the world, as she was in the past, when she governs the world according to the laws of Islam'.³⁵

Popular with the younger demographic, today, HUT is active all over the world, with a significant number of student followers in the UK. Highly controversial due to allegations of anti-Semitism, misogamy and the failure to recognise human

³² Hizb-ut-tahrir, 'Latest Updates', <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/EN/>, 2014, (accessed 24th October 2014)

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ A. Wahid, 'A Response to David Davis MP in the Sunday Times', *Dr Abdul Wahid's Weblog*, [web blog], 12th August 2007, <https://drabdulwahids.wordpress.com/2008/03/14/a-response-to-david-davis-mp-in-the-sunday-times/>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

³⁵ Hizb-ut-tahrir 'Latest Updates'

rights, human rights groups have denounced the organisation, calling for a ban on membership in the UK. Renowned activist Peter Tatchell negatively describes HUT as ‘an Islamist fundamentalist organisation that seeks to impose its supremacist interpretation of Islam on the whole world’.³⁶ Demonstrating his clear contempt for the group, Tatchell further argues that HUT are guilty of extreme intolerance towards those Muslims who do not share their harsh, fundamentalist interpretation of Islam’.³⁷ Despite successive calls to ban the organisation in the UK, the government has repeatedly concluded the group is non-violent in nature and while the ideology it promotes may be incompatible with western norms and values, this does not provide sufficient grounds for proscription. Former Home Secretary, John Reid, has concurred with this finding stating there is no evidence to support the allegation that HUT is a violent organisation.³⁸

Based on the established link between British Muslims convicted of terrorism and involvement in HUT, observers commonly ask whether the group serves as an ‘incubator’ of extremist terrorism. Critics claim that it does so both directly and indirectly through political indoctrination of members, education that amounts to a light-touch form of ‘radicalisation’. Two leading antagonists of HUT are former members Ed Hussain and Maajid Nawaz. Both men left the group to set up counter radicalisation think tanks and now regularly denounce the organisation, accusing it of being a grass roots breeding ground for extremists. Specifically Hussain has lambasted the government policy concerning HUT, which he says has been ‘a disastrous combination of laissez faire and political correctness’.³⁹ In drawing a comparison with Germany and their strict counter radicalisation policy, Hussain accuses the British government of failing to recognise the way in which HUT has ‘incubated the mentality that saw some members graduate to terrorism’.⁴⁰ Zeyno Baran of the Nixon Centre supports this proposition, arguing that although the group

³⁶ P. Tatchell, ‘Protest against Hizb ut-Tahrir conference in East London’, *Peter Tatchell*, [web blog], 2011, <http://www.petertatchell.net/religion/protest-against-hizb-ut-tahrir.htm>, (accessed 5th June 2014)

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Wahid ‘A Response to David Davis MP in the Sunday Times’

³⁹ M. Bunting, ‘We were the brothers’, *The Guardian*, 12th May 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/may/12/religion.news>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

does not promote or engage in violence, it ‘acts as a conveyor belt for young Muslims who are indoctrinated before joining more extreme groups that may engage in violence’.⁴¹

Leader of HUT in the UK, Dr Abdul Wahid strongly rejects any association between his organisation and terrorism. He claims that HUT has a political culture that not only stresses non-violence but also the importance of finding intellectual and political solutions to the problems faced by Muslims.⁴² This proposition holds weight given the absence of any convictions of active HUT members for terrorism offences and the continued failure of the British government to ban the organisation despite several pledges to do so. Wahid also rejects the allegation that HUT serves as an incubator for future terrorists claiming it is analogous to demonising universities for educating far right politicians. Wahid points out that the leader of the BNP, Nick Griffin, was once an active member of the National Front while a history undergraduate at Cambridge. In a classified report, the British government have discounted the so-called *conveyor belt theory* widely promoted by critics of HUT and often used by antagonists to pressure the government into an all-out ban. Specifically, the report states, ‘we do not believe that it is an accurate to regard radicalisation in this country as a linear conveyor belt moving from grievance, through radicalisation to violence...this thesis seems to both misread the radicalisation process and to give undue weight to ideological factors’.⁴³

British Islamic fundamentalist preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed, founder of ALM, first began his career in London as a dutiful leader of HUT. In February 1996 after 18 years of membership, Bakri quit the organisation to launch ALM. He claimed to have no ideological disagreement with HUT and on comparison with ALM, the only differences between them appear to be the more direct, media driven approach of the latter. It may be the case that ALM was eventually banned not for its ideology, but

⁴¹ S. Malik, ‘For Allah and the caliphate’. *New Statesman*, 13th September 2004, <http://www.newstatesman.com/node/148823>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

⁴² A. Walid, ‘Who are Hizb ut-Tahrir? Interview, Live Calls by Dr Abdul Wahid’, *YouTube*, 30th January 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aivekT3J3MY>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

⁴³ A. Gilligan, ‘Hizb ut Tahrir is not a gateway to terrorism, claims Whitehall report’, *Telegraph*, 25th July 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-gilligan/7908262/Hizb-ut-Tahrir-is-not-a-gateway-to-terrorism-claims-Whitehall-report.html>, (accessed 24th October 2014)

rather because the government needed to be seen as strong in the face of growing fundamentalist aggression. In particular, the emotive business of noisy demonstrations held during the funerals of British soldiers killed in Afghanistan. A significant number of British fundamentalist Muslims that have pursued terrorism, previously engaged with both HUT and ALM. Observers widely alleged that Bakri Mohammed and his deputies regularly encouraged Muslims to pursue jihad in Afghanistan despite the risk that Al-Qaeda would recruit them for suicide terrorism back in the UK.⁴⁴

Revolutionary Egyptian scholar Sayyed Qutb

Providing a rigorous intellectual basis for the increasingly popular fundamentalist ideology sweeping the Middle East were the writings of Egyptian scholar Sayyid Qutb. Educated in the United States, Qutb shared the fears of Muslim brotherhood leader Al-Banna over the decline of religion in favour of capitalist driven consumerism. Qutb advocated a back to basics style interpretation of Islam, strict adherence to the Quran and the Sunnah. Proving popular with the devoutly religious, Qutb quickly attracted widespread support, in particular among young students. One of his most ardent pupils was 14-year-old Ayman al-Zawahiri. In adulthood, Dr Zawahiri would eventually become the leader of terrorist group Al-Qaeda after the death of Osama Bin Laden. British fundamentalist Muslims that have engaged in acts of terrorism regularly cited the influence of Sayed Qutb. In order to understand the continued relevance of his work to fundamentalists, it is necessary to understand the key ideas he put forward that have helped inspire a minority of British Muslims to pursue terrorism.

In 1964, Qutb published his seminal manifesto entitled *Ma-alim fi al-Tariq*, known in English as *Milestones*. This short book argues that Muslims have lost their way and in order to avoid damnation, must return to life under Shariah. Qutb advocated the establishment of an Islamic vanguard with two aligned objectives. Firstly to remove all obstacles preventing Muslims from living under Shariah, and secondly to ensure non-Muslims have freewill to choose Islam. Milestones offers providence for modern day use of the term “fundamentalism” as a means to describe

⁴⁴ H. Stuart, 'Disrupting Extremists: More effective use of existing legislation', *Centre for the response to Radicalization and Terrorism*, Policy Paper No. 3, 2014

those Muslims who adhere to a strict interpretation of Islam. In his writing, Qutb constantly refers to the *fundamentals of Islam*, which he believes should provide the basis for mobilisation against western crusaders. In addition, Qutb promotes “movement” as being the most appropriate label for representing the nation of Islam. Specifically he writes:

The construction of Islamic belief occurred under these stormy conditions, and not in the form of a theology or theory or scholastic argument. It was rather as an active, organic and vital movement, the concrete representation of which was the Muslim community. The evolution of this movement was wholly the practical manifestation of the evolution of its beliefs, and this is the true method of Islam, which reflects its nature and its spirit.... The requirement of Islamic belief is that it takes shape in living souls, in an active organization, and in a viable community. It should take the form of a movement.⁴⁵

Drawing on the language adopted by Qutb whose literature appears on the reading list of conspirators engaged in several major terrorism plots carried out by British Muslims⁴⁶, use of the words “fundamentalism” and “movement” within this thesis appear entirely justified. In particular, the terms accurately personify the organisation of British fundamentalist Muslims who now seek to establish the political objectives initially set down by Qutb. Specifically, that following the overthrow of apostate Middle Eastern dictators Islam would eventually come to dominate the world. Reacting to the growing popularity of Islamic fundamentalism, the Egyptian government executed Qutb in 1966. Prosecutors used excerpts from *Milestones* as evidence of treason. However, this act of political tyranny served only to ascend Qutb as a martyr. His call to remove the shackles preventing humanity from embracing the word of God resonated widely across the Muslim World. The demand for Shariah thundered loudly amongst both Sunni and Shia Muslims and in 1979, Iranian students led a revolution to oust the overtly pro-American Shah of Iran. The extent to which his ideas were path-breaking and had great resonance to modern day British fundamentalist Muslims is underlined by the way in which the writings of Qutb feature in almost every major UK terrorism trial since 2004.

⁴⁵ S. Qutb, *Milestones*, New York, Globusz Publishing, 1964, p.28

⁴⁶ The seminal text *Milestones* can be found in the court transcripts relating to five of six major UK terrorism trials undertaken between 2003 and 2013

Emergence of Al-Qaeda in post-soviet Afghanistan

Between 2003 and 2006, Al-Qaeda operatives directed at least four terrorist conspiracies targeting the UK. The British Muslims who operated at the behest of Al-Qaeda in these atrocities were previously radicalised through their involvement with the Islamic fundamentalist movement. It is therefore important to understand how Al-Qaeda emerged and why the organisation has attracted followers in the UK, most notably Omar Bakri Mohammed, a self-proclaimed spokesman for the organisation during the late 1990s. The origins of Al-Qaeda are often glossed over by those who advocate western interference in the Middle East. Specifically, because this terrorist organisation is widely considered the result of US led support for the Afghan mujahedeen. Through an alliance with Saudi Arabia, the United States helped equip Sunni Mujahedeen in Afghanistan during the last years of the Cold War. At the time, the United States interpreted its own national security interests almost exclusively through the prism of a Cold War conflict and therefore it served their interests to ally themselves with the Sunnis, at least in the short term. Promoting the same doctrine that now directs thousands of young Muslims to take up arms against the west, the United States and Saudi Arabia encouraged Sunni fundamentalists to fight the Godless communists in Afghanistan. Writing for *Global Research* in 2012, Benjamin Schett has argued, 'Saudi backed archaic ideology served as an incentive to thousands of confused young men to receive military training in Pakistan in the 1980's, from where they were sent to Afghanistan in order to kill Russians'.⁴⁷ While Sunni Muslims were busy fighting Soviet conscripts using state of the art military hardware, Iranian backed Shia militants were diligently carrying out acts of terrorism against the United States. This included the 1983 bombing of the US Marine barracks in Beirut as well as the 1984 torture and killing of two American citizens in the same city.⁴⁸

As the world adjusted to a post-communist era, the President of Iraq, Saddam Hussain, exploited the power vacuum to fulfil this countries long-nurtured ambition to

⁴⁷ B. Schett, 'US Sponsored Islamic Fundamentalism: The roots of the US-Wahhabi Alliance', *Global Research*, 7th September 2012, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-sponsored-islamic-fundamentalism-the-roots-of-the-us-wahhabi-alliance/5303558?print=1>, (accessed 9th October 2014)

⁴⁸ B. Stephens, 'Stephens: Iran's Unrequited War', *The Wall Street Journal*, 22nd October 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB100014240529702036306045780724524434475682>, (accessed 7th October 2014)

annex neighbouring Kuwait. With the former Soviet Union in turmoil, the United States dominated the UN Security Council. This allowed them to achieve a resolution authorising the use of force to liberate the small but oil rich state of Kuwait. US forces stationed in Saudi Arabia quickly overran the Iraqi army leading to heavy losses as they retreated to Baghdad. Unknown at the time, wealthy Saudi Arabian, Osama Bin Laden, took particular offence to the markedly increased presence of western soldiers on historical Muslim land. He accused the Saudi Arabian Royal Family of apostasy and of being illegitimate custodians of the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina. Also denounced by Islamic fundamentalist groups in Afghanistan, the ruling Saudi elite quickly became the primary target of Islamic revolutionaries, many of whom had received support, directly or indirectly from the House of Saud. How best to overthrow them however, continues to divide fundamentalists.

Accordingly, from the mid-1990s, two different insurgent groups emerged from Afghanistan, both representing a serious threat to western interests. The first of these groups focused on the “Near Enemy”, that is to say, they sought to directly overthrow Muslim leaders in their own country who failed to rule according to Sharia. Observers describe this approach as classic insurgency. The second group, made notorious by the actions of *Al-Qaeda*, sought to achieve the same objective but indirectly by targeting foreign supporters. In order to remove the apostate Saudi royal family, Al-Qaeda reasoned that it was far more effective to cut off the support base keeping them in power. Bin Laden resolved that without US aid, domestic fundamentalists would feel empowered enough to rise up and implement regime change on their own. He urged all Muslims to focus their attention on the “Far Enemy”, the United States, without whose hidden support, all the apostate regimes would crumble. Many radical Muslim groups rejected Bin Laden’s approach, arguing that it would increase American support to their local enemies and retard Islamic interests.⁴⁹

In contrast to the fight against the Soviets, Al-Qaeda decided the best approach to take against the US would be a war of attrition. Consequently, acts of terrorism against non-combatants became the organisations preferred means to achieve their objective. The campaign began in 1993 when Khalid Sheikh

⁴⁹ F. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005

Mohammed, an associate of Osama Bin Laden, financed a successful bomb attack against the World Trade Centre in New York.⁵⁰ Sunni fundamentalists, who had previously collaborated with the US during the 1980's, were now engaged in all out war with the west. Further bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 quickly placed Bin Laden on America's list of most wanted terrorists. These attacks were sporadic but underlined the way in which Bin Laden sought to build a global coalition. Support for Al-Qaeda amongst British Muslims came from an alignment between fundamentalist ideology and the goals exposed by the organisation, in particular their long-term objective to establish an Islamic Caliphate. In order to understand why Al-Qaeda proved popular within Muslim communities across the UK (four terrorist plots carried out by British Muslims between 2003 and 2006 were directed by Al-Qaeda) the next section examines key events relevant to the British Muslim community which helped lay the foundations for Al-Qaeda's virulent anti-western political ideology.

A receptive audience for Islamic fundamentalism

Why did Islamic fundamentalism spread so rapidly in the United Kingdom throughout the 1990s? In the latter decades of the 20th century, a number of domestic and international events relevant to British Muslims provided the groundwork that preachers would later rely on in order to gain a receptive audience for their fundamentalist message. The most significant issues concern insults to the Prophet Mohammed, Islamic Jihad as well as western sanctions against Iraq following the first Gulf War in 1991. In particular, opposition by British Muslims to Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses, helped construct a receptive audience for ideologues, men who preached back to basics Islam as a solution to the problems faced by the nation of Islam. In order to challenge Islamic fundamentalism in the UK, policymakers require an understanding of these key events in order provide suitable counter narratives.

Kashmir

The cities of Birmingham and Bradford have a strong concentration of Muslims from Pakistan whose parents emigrated from the Mirpur region of Kashmir. Within these

⁵⁰ J. Childers and J. Gilmore and H. DePippo, 'Senate Judiciary Committee Hearings: Foreign Terrorists in America: Five Years After the World Trade Centre'. *US Senate Judiciary Committee*, 24th February 1998

communities, support for secular nationalist insurgent groups fighting Indian forces began in 1976. That year, two Kashmiri's namely Amandullah Khan and Maqbool Bhat founded the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) in the Alum Rock district of Birmingham. The principle aim of the group was and continues to be the independence of Kashmir. Previously, Bhat engaged in various criminal acts that eventually led to his arrest, prosecution and death sentence for murder.⁵¹ In response, on February 3rd 1984, JKLF members in Birmingham kidnapped diplomat Ravindra Mhatre.⁵² The operation was part of a plot designed to force the Indian government to release Bhat from Prison. The President of India, Giyani Singh, steadfastly refused to negotiate and consequently JKLF shot Mhatre dead. In retaliation, Singh ordered the execution of Bhat a week later. The following year, Police arrested Amandullah Khan on suspicion of being behind the kidnapping plot. Although acquitted of any involvement, the government later deported Khan to Pakistan. The significance of British Muslim support for the JKLF is that it helped pave the way for fundamentalism in the UK. British Pakistani Muslims familiar with the concepts of jihad and insurgency made a receptive audience for preachers who would later invite them to join the Islamic fundamentalist movement originating out of London during the mid-1990s.

During the roughly two year period spent in England, leader of the JKLF Amandullah Khan, built up a strong support base amongst the Kashmiri diaspora. This network would later prove vital to the armed struggle for independence that began shortly after disputed parliamentary elections in 1987. The JKLF are not Islamic fundamentalists, they do not share the same long-term goals for the disputed region of Kashmir in terms of an Islamic state. However, they compete with Pakistani backed groups such as Laskha-e-Taiba and Harakut Al-Mujihadeen who are Islamic fundamentalists and who profess religious ambitions for the country.⁵³ Although a minority of British Pakistani Muslims widely support the JKLF, advocate armed insurgency and have provided both finance and equipment to the struggle, at the same time the majority reject the type of terrorism advocated by groups like Al-Qaeda.⁵⁴

⁵¹ A. Anant, 'Identity and Conflict: Perspectives from the Kashmir Valley', *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 33, no. 5, 2009, pp. 760-73

⁵² B. Rubin, 'Chronicles of Modern Terrorism', *ME Sharpe*, New York, 2008

⁵³ Author interview with Amandullah Khan, Skype [online], 20th November 2013

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

British Muslims that have pursued terrorism are widely known to have used networks connecting Birmingham and Kashmir in order to help facilitate training for jihad. In particular, British born Al-Qaeda operative Rashid Rauf initially trained with Harakut Al-Mujihadeen before travelling to Afghanistan to join Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces fighting the western coalition.

The conflation of all British Muslims who support Kashmiri independence into a single polycot labelled ‘fundamentalists’ is naively misguided. In failing to recognise the distinction between fundamentalists and moderate Muslims supporting liberal democracy through armed insurgency, the British government potentially risks alienating the very people with whom it may one day have to do business.⁵⁵ The distinction between rival insurgent group ideologies appears more nuanced in respect of the Syrian civil war that began in 2010. Britain has faced a difficult trade-off between achieving its foreign policy goal of removing President Assad, whilst not arming and training men who may one-day pursue terrorism against the west. Consequently, while Saudi Arabia has supplied weapons and finance to the entire opposition movement, British Foreign Secretary William Hague has shown a greater appreciation of the threat posed by fundamentalism. Consequently, he has campaigned to supply armoured cars and body armour to non-fundamentalist groups only.⁵⁶ Moderate Islam therefore appears to be synonymous with secular nationalism. Notwithstanding the alignment of British foreign interests and the totality of rebel forces, policy makers are vehemently opposed to the prospect of an Islamic republic in Syria and therefore walk a fine line in pursuing their foreign interests.

The Satanic Verses

In January 1989, approximately one thousand Muslims marched through the northern city of Bradford burning copies of the *Satanic Verses*. Historically the greatest of enemies, Sunni and Shia united in their condemnation of Salman Rushdie’s novel,

⁵⁵ Far more than mere theorizing, one need only consider the case of Libyan Abdel Hakim Belhaj to appreciate this argument. Today a senior Politician in the moderate Libyan government, during the reign of Colonel Gadhafi, Britain is alleged to have assisted in the extra-ordinary rendition of Belhaj to Tripoli where he was tortured.

⁵⁶ K Sengupta, ‘Conflict in Syria creates wave of British jihadists’, *The Independent*, 13th March 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/conflict-in-syria-creates-wave-of-british-jihadists-8533386.html>, (accessed 9th October 2014)

which they both considered an insult to the Prophet Mohammed. Although acts of Islamic terrorism in the UK are largely a modern phenomenon, during the Rushdie affair, British Muslim protesters firebombed several prominent books stores. This predisposition to use violence, demonstrates that even before Islamic fundamentalism emerged in the UK, a minority of British Muslims were more than willing to violently defend their faith. Journalist Malies Ruthven who observed the Bradford protests has noted how placards with the most violent messages were carried by jean-wearing angry young men who failed to observe prayers in the same way as their elders. Almost twenty years later in contemporary protests against those who insult the Prophet Mohammed, we note the complete opposite. While young Muslims still dominate the landscape, they are at pains to dress and generally act in strict accordance with Islamic doctrine. Compared with peers from the previous generation, public demonstrations appear confined to the fundamentalist domain. Due to increased stigmatisation by media and the government, and out of fear of being labelled “extremist”, moderate Muslims of the type who protested against Rushdie, no longer appear willing either to speak out or protest publically.⁵⁷ In June 2007, two years after the London bombings, the government announced the Knighthood of Salmon Rushdie in the Queen’s birthday honours.⁵⁸ Despite protests around the Islamic world, politicians choose not to cancel the honour thereby failing to appreciate the importance of this issue as an agent of ‘radicalisation’ amongst British fundamentalists.

1991 Gulf War

The second event to help ingratiate Islamic fundamentalism into the UK concerned the first Gulf War. Responding to the 1991 invasion of Kuwait, the United Nations Security Council authorised an American led coalition to remove the occupying Iraqi army. Before western forces arrived in the Arab peninsula, British Muslims held anti-war demonstrations outside mosques in both London and Birmingham. Fundamentalists abhorred the presence of foreign fighters in the most sacred of Muslim lands. At violent protests, they burned an American flag and called for a holy

⁵⁷ M. Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1990

⁵⁸ J. Percival, ‘Why Salman Rushdie was knighted’, *BBC News Online*, 20th June 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6222414.stm>, (accessed 24th October)

war of liberation to remove occupying forces. In response to the US invasion and directly inciting British Muslims, leader of the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) called for the worlds Muslims to take up arms and strike the interests of American imperialists and their allies. As discussed earlier, the majority of British Muslims are not Arabs, which likely explains the relatively muted reaction to the first Gulf war amongst moderates.

The loudest voices against western military engagement in Kuwait came as expected from Islamic fundamentalists in the UK. Public demonstrations condemning the government's decision to expel Iraqi forces were beginning to influence the politics of British Muslims more generally. For example leader of the Bangladeshi Muslim community in Manchester told a reporter that general opinion appeared to have taken a more combative turn, and that personally he would consider going to Iraq to fight for Saddam.⁵⁹ Secondly, a conference of UK Muslim leaders condemned US led aggression and declared that by supporting such action, the ruling family of Saudi Arabia had forfeited its right to act as custodian of Mecca and Medina. The importance of the first gulf war as an agent of radicalisation appears clear from even the most cursory examination of fundamentalist literature published in the years following the initial conflict. Western sanctions against Iraq during the 1990s caused widespread suffering amongst the ordinary population. This 'act of oppression' is widely condemned by British Muslims, in particular, those who have pursued acts of terrorism upon learning about the deaths of women and children due to a shortage of basic supplies.

Bosnia

The most contemporary event to help construct a receptive audience in the UK for fundamentalist Islam occurred not long after the liberation of Kuwait. Civil War in Bosnia Herzegovinia in the early 1990's became a significant politicising event within the British Muslim community. Failure by the west to protect against genocide caused Bosnia to replace Afghanistan as an overtly religious conflict pitting Muslim against Non-Muslim. As Britain sought a peaceful resolution Muslim men, women, and children living less than two hours plane journey away, faced the combined tyranny of

⁵⁹ L. Eichel, 'British Muslims Back Away from Mideast Rhetoric', *Inquirer*, 21st January 1991

Serbian militia and government forces. Even moderate Muslims in the UK recognised they had a religious obligation to act. Consequently, hundreds took up arms in order to halt the Serbian onslaught. While the majority of foreign fighters returned home in 1995 when the conflict ended, a minority went on to fight in Chechnya and Kashmir. A number of British Muslims who returned to the UK after fighting in Bosnia felt a greater affinity to their religion. Consequently, men like Shahid Butt joined extremist preachers, helping to promote Islamic fundamentalism and gain support for global jihad. Today, the same individuals are responsible for constructing the environment that has led hundreds of young British Muslims to fight in the Syrian civil war. Unlike in Bosnia however, the objective is not merely to prevent genocide by a tyrannical dictator, but rather more importantly, to help establish a Caliphate – the dream pushed by fundamentalists in the UK since the late 1990s. Having considered key events that helped ensure the British Muslim community were receptive to the ideas promoted by fundamentalist preachers, the next section examines in detail how they managed to achieve this so quickly and how the environment they subsequently constructed led to the incubation of extremist terrorism.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the UK

After the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in 1990, Islamic fundamentalism found a new lease of life. Buoyed by their relative success, veteran mujahedeen formed new revolutionary groups determined to overthrow Middle Eastern dictators. With the Taliban controlling Afghanistan and riding high on the wave of post-Cold War optimism, fundamentalists confidently sought to re-establish the once powerful Caliphate. The Islamic fundamentalist movement that began sixty years earlier in Egypt, now resurrected in Afghanistan, quickly gathered momentum around the world. As was the case before the Second World War, revolutionaries met fierce opposition from regimes enjoying full financial and military support from the West. In response, fundamentalists in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Jordan routinely suffered from extreme violence and politically orientated criminal prosecution. Those who avoided extra-judicial killing and lengthy prison terms fled to Europe. As a long established refuge for dissidents, political activists like Palestinian Abu Qatada, and Syrian born Omar Bakri Mohammed quickly obtained asylum from the British government. Unable to overthrow dictators in their home countries, these men began

organising grass roots support for insurgent groups in Yemen, Afghanistan and in particular Algeria. Collectively, these preachers and their growing number of supporters constituted the UK division of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Amongst other narratives, followers argued the west was engaged in total war with Islam and therefore every able Muslim was obligated to fight back by waging Jihad.

During the 1990s, politicians in Westminster laboured tirelessly on brokering long-term peace in Northern Ireland and this was the focus of MI5's attention. Meanwhile, newly arrived preachers from the Middle East widely disseminated fundamentalist political ideology across the Muslim community of Great Britain. Their importance was not recognised for a decade. However, on 24 January 2000, the chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee asked Stephen Lander, the Director General of MI5, who the greatest threat to Britain was. Without hesitation, he replied 'France'. He explained that they had some very dangerous terrorists, mainly of Algerian decent and given the proximity of the border 'they represent a very serious and present danger'.⁶⁰ In the 1990s, MI5 had accepted the presence of some of these Algerian radicals in London because they provided an excellent source of intelligence and were thought only to be targeting France. Now, Al Qaeda was marshalling disparate Islamist movements into a global struggle and they looked more dangerous.⁶¹

Spreading the fundamentalist message

Fundamentalist narratives entirely at odds with concepts of equality, freedom of religion, human rights and secular democracy gained significant favour within Mosques, community centres, cafes and bookshops in the suburbs of Bradford, Birmingham and East London. Travelling the length and breadth of the UK, preachers used all means possible to encourage fellow Muslims to join the growing Islamic fundamentalist movement. Supplementing regular sermons, followers distributed a variety of literature and multimedia outlining both their political and religious views and invited fellow Muslims to join them. Scholar Gilles Kepel introduced the term "Salafist Jihadism" to describe the ideology uniting British Muslims across the UK during the mid-1990s. Kepel argued these men promoted violent jihad as a means to

⁶⁰ Entry for 1 May 1996, Morgan, *The Insider*, p.115

⁶¹ Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*

re-establish the Caliphate and overthrow Middle Eastern dictators failing to rule according to Shariah. Demonstrating the 1990s link between fundamentalism and modern day Islamic terrorism, preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed responded to the events of 9/11 by praising the attackers and openly proclaiming he had become a Salafi Muslim, theologically aligned with Al-Qaeda. Bakri later became the terrorist groups spokesperson in Europe, taking responsibility for disseminating a fatwa issued by Bin Laden in 1998 in which he declared war on America.⁶²

Still a relatively small and insignificant movement in the early 1990s, fundamentalists were, however, starting to attract a growing number of followers. Fellow of the Royal United Services Institute, Raff Pantucci, has said of this period, 'During the first Gulf War, you have individuals who are now quite prominent for example, Omar Bakri Mohammad or his other permanent acolytes who were shouting about how the west was going to suffer for invading a Muslim country'.⁶³ As these men moved from the mosques and onto the streets to protest against events in Iraq, the consequence was to greatly increase the public profile of the fundamentalist movement. With the Internet still in its infancy, 'radicalisation' relied heavily on printed publications. Followers openly distributed extremist material such the *Al-Ansar* and *Al-Jihad* magazines outside of mosques at the end of Friday prayers. Muslims taking a copy also gained information about private meetings in which preachers offered attendees a greater insight into fundamentalism and the global struggle to establish a Caliphate.⁶⁴ Relating back to the origins of fundamentalism as a political ideology, we note how the writings of Sayyed Qutb were also widely distributed amongst fundamentalists.

In standing up against the United States whose troops now occupied the Arab Peninsula, fundamentalist preachers were afforded a great deal of respect and legitimacy amongst the Muslim community. This became especially true amongst young Muslims struggling with their identity in the face of racism, unemployment and

⁶² G. Kepel, 'The origins and development of the Jihadist movement: from anti-communism to terrorism', *Asian Affairs*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2003, pp. 91-108.

⁶³ Author interview with Raff Pantucci, London, 20th August 2013

⁶⁴ J. Turner, 'From Cottage Industry to International Organisation: The Evolution of Salafi-Jihadism and the Emergence of the Al Qaeda Ideology', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2010, pp. 541-8

the false promise of social mobility.⁶⁵ Race riots at the turn of the century in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley further isolated the Muslim community from mainstream British society. Muslims who turned to fundamentalism did not feel an intrinsic connection to the larger British society; some did not even feel a connection to their own community.⁶⁶ Rejecting ordinary life in favour of total emersion in religion, these men found themselves drawn towards radical ideas promoted by the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Preachers contributed to making them feel indifferent to society, telling them they have been left out and isolated, let down by government. In contrast, fundamentalism offered them an opportunity to feel important, like they were part of something greater than themselves.⁶⁷ With the fundamentalist message thoroughly received, the next step from the preacher's perspective was to encourage new and existing followers to pursue jihad.

Promoting overseas jihad

By the late 1990s, an increasing number of moderate British Muslims found themselves drawn into fundamentalism. Small but vocal movements operated on the fringes of Muslim communities across London, Birmingham, Luton, Leeds and Bradford. Technological advances such as the Internet and mobile phones greatly assisted official 'brands' of the fundamentalist movement including *Supporters of Sharia*, *Al Gharuba* and *Al-Muhajiroun* to increase their reach and better organise activity thereby dramatically increasing number of followers. Recognising jihad as a core obligation, preachers consistently encouraged British Muslims to volunteer with the mujahedeen in Algeria, Chechnya, Kashmir and northern parts of Africa. More recently since 2012, Syria has become the number one destination of foreign fighters determined to establish an Islamic Caliphate.

It is important to reiterate, especially in the case of Kashmir and to an extent in Syria that not all British Muslims who pursue jihad are necessarily fundamentalists. From the early 1990s, young Muslim men in Birmingham volunteered to fight with secular nationalist insurgent groups in Kashmir. Their motivation had less to do with

⁶⁵ Author interview with Anonymous Counter Terrorism Officer, SO15 New Scotland Yard, London, 28th August 2013

⁶⁶ Author interview with Jahan Mahmood, Birmingham, 16th August 2013

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

the Quran and more to do with tales told to them by fathers and grandfathers who themselves had fought brutal Indian occupation.⁶⁸ Similarly, while British Muslims fighting in Syria initially did so out of concern for their oppressed co-religionists, the fundamentalists quickly came to dominate the conflict attracting foreign fighters with promises of an Islamic Caliphate.

By September 11 2001, Islamic Fundamentalism had become deeply entrenched in Muslim Communities across the UK. Until 9/11 at least, the British government tolerated fundamentalist preachers as long as they did not incite followers to carry out terrorism in the UK. In essence, fundamentalists were free to encourage British Muslims to join overseas insurgencies because at the time, the government held concern that they might return to the UK and pursue terrorism. Former Home Secretary David Blunkett has said of this period:

I think it was true, I think there was a presumption, including by the police, that if you knew who these people were, then you could monitor them. They say well if we know where they are and who they are, its better than dispersing them and people being underground. I think, whilst I understand the psychology of that, it does not make a lot of sense if you are trying to snuff out, if you are trying to deal at a very early stage with seedlings that might grow into something much bigger and which deliberately hide much serendipitous and dangerous activity.⁶⁹

Retired former head of Counter Terrorism (SO15) for the Metropolitan Police, Stuart Osbourne, believes the high profile nature of these preachers came from the gravitas they held within minority sections of the local community.⁷⁰ Although religion may initially have drawn followers into the movement, the charismatic nature of men like Abu Qatada, Abu Hamza Al-Masri and Omar Bakri Mohammed and the revolutionary jihadist messages they promoted, were significantly important for retaining disillusioned young Muslims. Utilising their influence, preachers regularly encouraged and in certain instances, helped facilitate British Muslims to pursue jihad, which in turn brought them into contact with international terrorist groups like Al-

⁶⁸ K. Connor, "Islamism" in the West? The Life-Span of the Al-Muhajiroun in the United Kingdom, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005, pp. 117-33

⁶⁹ Author interview with David Blunkett, London, 9th October 2013

⁷⁰ Author interview with Stuart Osbourne, London, 16th September 2013

Qaeda. Between 2003 and 2006, operatives linked to Al-Qaeda convinced a minority of those who volunteered for jihad, that they could better serve the cause by returning to the UK to pursue terrorism. The success of US led drone strikes in the tribal regions of Pakistan, significantly debilitated the global reach of Al-Qaeda and from 2007 onwards, the pursuit of Jihad by British Muslims had become dominated by ‘self-starters’.

Incubating extremist terrorism

After the 2001, US led invasion of Afghanistan, members of the UK Islamic fundamentalist movement performed various activities that were critical in establishing an environment from which terrorism could thrive. As discussed above, fundamentalist preachers arrived in Britain throughout the 1990’s. In London, these men commonly served as spokespersons for various insurgent/terrorist groups around the world. In tandem, they organised dissident political activism against apostate dictators, publically condemned the west, encouraged young British Muslims to pursue jihad and in a minority of cases post 9/11, were guilty of inciting acts of terrorism directly.⁷¹

To enable the mujahedeen to wage jihad in Afghanistan and establish a Caliphate, they required finance and equipment from western supporters. Encouraged by preachers, fundamentalists in the UK solicited charitable donations from the Muslim community. Combined with credit card fraud, finance raised in the UK helped purchase weapons and equipment subsequently shipped to Afghanistan. Throughout the 1990’s, mosques in the Muslim communities of Birmingham, East London and Bradford administered collection tins on behalf of the mujahedeen. Although the practice was not obvious to outside visitors, it was common knowledge these funds were being sent to places like Kashmir and Afghanistan to aid insurgencies.⁷² Until a clampdown by the British government in 2000, significant amounts of finance and equipment from the UK found its way to the front line of Islamic insurgency around the globe. Actions taken in order to halt this activity

⁷¹ J. Birt, ‘Good Imam, Bad Imam: Civic Religion and National Integration in Britain post-9/11’, *The Muslim World*, vol. 96, no. 4, 2006, pp. 687-705

⁷² Author’s interview with Anonymous Counter Terrorism Officer, SO15 New Scotland Yard, London, 28th August 2013

resulted in a number of individuals and charities in the UK having their bank accounts seized and appropriated by the government.⁷³ The importance of this activity for incubating terrorism is clear. Firstly, by financially supporting overseas jihad, British Muslims developed the means by which to raise money for their own terrorist ambitions. Secondly, as financial backers of the mujahedeen, British fundamentalists were able to use their connections in Pakistan and Afghanistan to gain the training necessary to construct improvised explosive devices.

In addition to fundraising, fundamentalists were also responsible for facilitating Muslims wishing to pursue Jihad. Those who did pursue jihad in Afghanistan were at risk of ‘volunteering’ as suicide bombers back in the UK. One of the most prominent *facilitators* was British born and raised Shahid Butt.⁷⁴ The former jihadist first came to the attention of Police in 1999, when Yemeni security services detained him and seven associates found in possession of a catchment of arms.⁷⁵ Despite a conviction for terrorism in a Yemeni court, the men were eventually released and returned to the UK where they continued to play an important role in promoting Islamic fundamentalism amongst the Muslim community in Birmingham. Modelled on Butt, facilitators are typically jihadi veterans who have maintained contacts overseas and can therefore be relied upon to organise military training for fellow Muslims.

Without preachers, fundraisers, recruiters, facilitators and jihadists it would have been difficult if not impossible for future terrorists to gain any kind of support, legitimacy or operational direction. The Islamic fundamentalist movement was therefore critical in this respect. Like any socio-political organisation, members required an ideology to attract new followers and direct their attention and activities. In the next chapter, we use an archive of literature published by the fundamentalist movement in order to decipher the core tenets and associated narratives of this

⁷³ Freedom of Information (FOI) request by the author to the UK charity commission in June 2013, copy available on request from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

⁷⁴ Mahmud *Author interview*

⁷⁵ Staff Reporter, ‘Middle East families in Yemeni embassy demo’, *BBC News Online*, 9th January 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/251853.stm, (accessed 9th October 2014)

political ideology. Importantly, chapter five traces these ideas to discourse surrounding individuals convicted of terrorism offences in the UK.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ T. Abbas, 'Ethno-Religious Identities and Islamic Political Radicalism in the UK: A Case Study' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2007, pp. 429-42

Chapter Three - Politics of Islamic Fundamentalism

The previous chapter examined how the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* first emerged within Muslim communities across the UK. Due to several key events, ideologues for Islamic fundamentalism found a highly receptive audience in London, Luton, Birmingham and Leeds. Insults against the Prophet Mohammed, insurgency in Kashmir, the first Gulf war, and race riots in Bradford all helped ingratiate extremist preachers amongst the Muslim community. Young Muslims struggling to reconcile their religious and national identities made perfect recruits to the fundamentalist movement. Preachers like Abu Qatada and Omar Bakri Mohammed convinced an entire generation that fundamentalist Islam offered them a way out of decadent, hedonistic, “western” lifestyles. Muslims who subscribed to fundamentalism adopted a distinct set of political narratives and participated in activities designed to help re-establish the Islamic Caliphate.

To reiterate a key point made in chapter two more succinctly, there is no formal registration or membership of the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. Regardless of the school of Islamic law that a Muslim ascribes to, for example Salafi, Deobandi or Wahabi, affiliation to the fundamentalist movement requires only two common factors. Firstly, that a member adopt the political ideology thoroughly deconstructed in this chapter. Secondly, they carry out activities designed to achieve the primary objective, specifically the re-establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. Online communication and face-to-face contact help fundamentalists achieve this, either through support for insurgent groups or by encouraging terrorism. However, interaction and collaboration is not a prerequisite for membership. The term “Islamic fundamentalist movement” is academic shorthand, an expression adopted throughout this thesis in order to define the national organisation of fundamentalist Muslims in the UK. It is desirable that beyond this work, academics and policy makers will embrace the term within the relevant discourse, considering it the most suitable means in which to describe the environment from which domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims has emerged.

What are the politics of British fundamentalist Muslims who have volunteered to pursue Jihad in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen and more recently Syria? How can we

explain the seemingly irrational decision taken by ordinary men and women in the UK to travel to a war zone in order to fight and die on behalf of people they have never met? The answers lay in the narratives widely promoted within the Islamic fundamentalist movement since the late 1990s. It is from adoption of this extreme political ideology that a minority of British Muslims have developed the mindset necessary not only to pursue jihad but in a few instances, terrorism as well.

In search of an answer to the above question, this chapter deconstructs the politics associated with the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. Drawing on a detailed archive of literature published by protagonists towards the end of the century, focus is given to five distinct tenets constituted by around twenty extremist narratives. Individually and collectively, these anti-western ideas have mobilized and directed the activities of British Islamic fundamentalists since the mid-1990s. Overall, the thesis comprehensively argues that total immersion in the political ideology exhaustively detailed in this chapter, developed the necessary mindset amongst a minority of fundamentalists to pursue terrorism. Introduced in the previous chapter, the term *extreme fundamentalist* describes those British Muslims who have sought to kill or seriously injure fellow citizens since 2003. Primarily, Muslims who have pursued terrorism in the UK subscribe to a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. However, what are their politics? Extensively promoted by preachers, political narratives adopted by fundamentalists include western war against Islam, the inhumanity of Jews, the absence of Sharia from international politics and the legitimacy of jihad and terrorism. Individually and collectively, these extreme ideas led the majority of British fundamentalists to pursue armed insurgency and in later years, pushed a small minority to commit terrorism.

In discussing motivation for political violence by non-state actors, writers commonly focus heavily on foreign policy.¹ Domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims is widely considered to have been a response to the 2001 and 2003 invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq respectively.² While these events may have rallied a minority

¹ D. Mataconis, 'American Foreign Policy Is The Primary Motivation For Terrorism', *Outside the Beltway*, 28th August 2011, <http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/ron-paul-american-foreign-policy-is-the-primary-motivation-for-terrorism>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

² M. Rai, *7/7: The London Bombings, Islam and the Iraq War*, London, Pluto Press, 2006

of fundamentalists into action, alone they fail to capture the entire mindset of Muslims willing to sacrifice their lives in order to defend co-religionists and re-establish a Caliphate. More generally, this narrow approach that focuses exclusively on specific events in time, fails to appreciate the polycot of beliefs held by terrorists and how they interlink through social networking to form an aggressive tidal wave. A “perfect storm” combining fundamentalism, revenge, honour and opportunism, eventually led to the July 2005 suicide attack on the London underground. Consequently, to fully explain the emergence of terrorism carried out by British Muslims that began in 2003, it is necessary to examine the entire political discourse associated with the Islamic fundamentalist movement since the late 1990s.

Reflecting on every major UK terrorism trial since 2003, prosecutors have introduced evidence detailing vast quantities of so-called “fundamentalist material”. Barristers commonly use literature and multimedia found at the home of defendants to explore their underlying motivations and demonstrate their intention to pursue terrorism. Almost exclusively, the nature of this material links back to the political narratives associated with the fundamentalist movement. In March 1999, a jury convicted long-term fundamentalist Amer Mirza of throwing a petrol bomb at a Territorial Army base in west London.³ In court, Mirza claimed his motivation lie with the continued sanctions and airstrikes against the civilian population of Iraq – a key radicalising narrative associated with the political ideology of the fundamentalist movement. Fourteen years later in May 2013, the link between ideology associated with Islamic fundamentalism and acts of terrorism became clear. Killer of soldier Lee Rigby, Michael Adebolajo, expressed a positive desire to live under Sharia, free from western interference. Such aspiration is consistent with rhetoric associated with Anjem Choudary, a protégé of long standing preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed. Jahan Mahmood, a counter radicalisation worker in Alum Rock, Birmingham, suggests Abu Izzadeen, an extremist preacher and leading figure within the fundamentalist movement, could have scripted the entire speech.⁴

³ T. Whitehead, ‘Woolwich attack: Al Muhajiroun linked to one in five terrorist convictions’, 24th May 2013, *The Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10079827/Woolwich-attack-Al-Muhajiroun-linked-to-one-in-five-terrorist-convictions.html>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

⁴ Mahmood *Author interview*

This chapter relies heavily on an archive of literature published by two dominant fundamentalists groups who operated in London between 1995 and 2005. Specifically, attention focuses on discourse associated with Al-Muhajiroon (ALM) led by Omar Bakri Mohammed and Supporters of Sharia (SoS) directed by Abu Hamza Al-Masri. These two preachers and founders of the fundamentalist movement in London, stand accused of radicalising young British Muslims later convicted in relation to a number of high profile terrorist conspiracies in the UK.⁵ One of the main benefits of using this extensive archive is that it offers text authored before it became a criminal offence to “glorify acts of terrorism”. As such, the views expressed are more reliable and hold greater authenticity than self-censored public statements issued in the years that followed. It is paramount to recognise that members of the fundamentalist movement who later pursued terrorism, thoroughly immersed themselves in this extremist literature. The first section of this chapter summarises the major tenets of the fundamentalist political ideology that has driven men like Adebolajo to carry out acts of extreme violence against British citizens.

In Summary

British Muslims convicted of terrorism almost exclusively cite post 9/11 western invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as their primary motivation. Notwithstanding the dominant orthodoxy, this chapter proposes that western interference in Muslim countries provides insufficient coverage in terms of a holistic explanation. Rejecting such a reductionist approach, it is comprehensively argued the new wave of terrorism that first appeared in the UK around 2003, emerged from an environment conditioned by a complex multi-faceted political ideology. Within this ideology, five core tenets constituted by twenty-one distinct political narratives give an insight to the mindset of fundamentalists that have carried out acts of terrorism against fellow citizens. Consequently, it is important to recognise and understand the political ideology associated with the fundamentalist movement. Using this knowledge, policymakers are better equipped to develop counter narratives in order to deter future membership. Furthermore, to comprehend the motivation behind British Muslims that have

⁵ S. O’Neil, ‘Failed London transport bombers jailed for life - radicalised by Abu Hamza Al Masri at Finsbury Park Mosque’, *Militant Islam Monitor*, 9th July 2007, <http://www.militantislammonitor.org/article/id/3038>, (accessed 27th October)

undertaken terrorism against fellow citizens, it is necessary to determine the key ideas that pushed them over the edge. Chapter 5 of this dissertation attempts to link several case studies involving British fundamentalist terrorists with the political ideology deconstructed in this chapter.

Re-establishing the Islamic Caliphate lies at the heart of the fundamentalist movement's primary objectives. Since 2013, a significant number of members have travelled to Syria in order to fight with the *Islamic State* (IS). The nation of Islam governed by one legitimate Khalifah (leader) ruling according to Sharia, allegedly represents utopia for all fundamentalist Muslims. Former Home Secretary the Rt Hon David Blunkett has said of this seemingly universal goal, 'fundamentalists all shared a single global vision, a view of the world where things should be, a concept of the caliphate that was completely incompatible to most of the values of the UK society today'.⁶ In pursuing the Caliphate, fundamentalists have and continue to promote a political ideology considered largely at odds with western concepts of liberal democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, religious tolerance and multiculturalism. The following table summarises the universe of political narratives strictly observed by Muslims associated with the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* since the mid-1990s.

Political Tenet	Associated Narratives
Islamic Caliphate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To re-establish the Islamic Caliphate governed by Sharia is the primary goal of all fundamentalist Muslims in the UK • Through combative Jihad, the glorious mujahedeen must seek to over throw apostate Muslim leaders who fail to rule by Sharia • Man-made laws are oppressive, only Sharia offers a legitimate means in which to govern a nation • All regardless of religion are required to worship only one God (monotheism). Polytheists (those who worship multiple Gods) are an affront to Islam and must be 'wiped

⁶ Blunkett *Author interview*; Clarke *Author Interview*

	out'
Western war against Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitarian Intervention masks western desire to prevent Islamic fundamentalists from gaining power either democratically or through Jihad • Western leaders financially and militarily support friendly dictators who aggressively contain Islamic fundamentalists • UK counter terrorism legislation has oppressed British Muslims and prevented them from supporting Islamic fundamentalist groups in their efforts to establish the Islamic caliphate
Jews and the state of Israel will never see Peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jews are less than human and the greatest enemy of Muslims. They conspire with western leaders to oppress Islam in order to prevent the liberation of Palestine • Supported by the west whom they control, Jews steal land and oppress Palestinians • There can be no negotiation with Israel, the state must be wiped of the map and Jews can remain only remain in Palestine as slaves • The Palestinian Authority led by Fatah has betrayed its population. Only Hamas holds any legitimacy and can be trusted to fulfil the objective of destroying the Jewish state
Jihad offers the only legitimate solution to the problems faced by Muslims in the world today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jihad presents the only legitimate solution to the problems faced by the nation of Islam • Fighting against the enemies of Islam is obligatory for all able Muslims, moderate or fundamentalist • God has promised divine benefits to all those who participate in Jihad, especially any who are martyred for the cause • God has declared there will be a punishment for those who ignore the obligation to pursue Jihad

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and material support must be given to all Mujahedeen currently engaged in Jihad
Terrorism and Suicide Bombing are legitimate means of self-defence against western aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Citizens who pay taxes are as guilty of oppressing Muslims as the politicians they elect Terrorism carried out on 9/11 and 7/7 is the direct consequence of western interference in Muslim lands and the oppression of those who follow Islam British Muslims who are not fundamentalists are to be considered unbelievers and therefore should not be afforded any special treatment when pursuing terrorisms God encourages Muslims to terrorise their enemies therefore, it is entirely legitimate for Muslims to fight back against oppression using whatever means necessary. To die while terrorising the enemies of God and Islam is considered the greatest sacrifice any Muslim can possibly make

Table 1.0 Core tenets and related narratives of the fundamentalist political ideology as interpreted by the author from a thematic analysis of an archive of literature published by fundamentalists groups in 1999

The first and arguably most pervasive tenet of fundamentalist political ideology concerns re-establishing the Caliphate. A modern Islamic empire holds the potential to rival western liberal democracy and capitalist hegemony. More importantly, fundamentalists believe a Caliphate is necessary in order to correct the absence of God's law (Sharia) from domestic governance and international relations. Fundamentalists decry the widespread failure to implement Sharia, which they claim offers the only legitimate means in which to govern the Muslim nation. Middle Eastern leaders who ignore what God has commanded are criticised and denounced as apostates. The puppet dictators who pander to the west have compromised with religion in order to satisfy their own selfish egotistically desires. Although commonly perceived by the west to be an Islamic country ruled according to Sharia, in fact, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia breaks the most fundamental law of all. Specifically, that no man has the authority to rule over another. Fundamentalists who openly call for

regime change therefore despise the Saudi Royal family.⁷ Protests held in the UK by fundamentalist regularly feature banners calling for the global implementation of Sharia and the overthrow of apostate leaders. In January 2011, a group of fundamentalist Muslims known to have participated in such protests, pleaded guilty to conspiring to blow up the London Stock Exchange.⁸ This terrorist plot offers an important case study discussed later in chapter five. Significantly, it helps to demonstrate the relationship between Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.

The second tenet of the fundamentalist political ideology argues the west is at war with Islam. US and European states stand accused of subjugating Islam in order to secure the continuous flow of Middle Eastern oil.⁹ Muslims are obliged to fight the enemies of Islam. Therefore, it serves the fundamentalist movement to establish and continuously reinforce the narrative in which a state of war exists, thereby making it compulsory for all Muslims to take up arms in defence of the faith. Fundamentalists argue that after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924, European nations colonised the Middle East in order to exploit its vast natural resources. Consequential to this belief, fundamentalists claim that western foreign policy is deliberately orientated towards containing Muslim ambition. In support of their argument, they point to the continued occupation of Middle Eastern countries and the historical and contemporary interference in their domestic governance. Contemporary evidence appears in respect of the Syrian civil war that began in 2010. During the summer of 2014, Sunni insurgent group *Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham* (ISIS), swept rapidly across northern towns of Iraq and Syria, slaughtering enemy combatants in the hundreds. In response to this brutal campaign, the US sent military advisors to the

⁷ According to Islamic fundamentalists, the only legitimate means in which to govern a country is by God's law (Shariah). A leader is elected by a council of Islamic scholars and must govern in a manner consistent with how Mohammed ruled in the 7th century. By allowing American troops to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi forces, the Saudi government were ostracised by members of the Islamic fundamentalist movement worldwide. In fact, contrary to common belief, the primary aim of Al-Qaeda is not to destroy America, but to overthrow the Saudi Royal Family. Upon doing so, the mujihadeen would then restore the Sharia.

⁸ Hope Not Hate, 'The Al-Muhajiroun Network', Undated, <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/hate-groups/am/>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

⁹ F. Nahdi, 'Young, British and ready to fight: New laws and the war have pushed our Islamist radicals underground', *The Guardian Online*, 1st April 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/apr/01/religion.uk>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

region and later carried out drone strikes designed to prevent ISIS from making any further territorial gains.¹⁰ Pointedly, in August 2014, President Obama declared he would not allow jihadists [ISIS] to carve out a Caliphate straddling the northern regions of Syria and Iraq.¹¹ Concurrent with his announcement, US fighter jets began striking targets associated with the group, destroying heavy armour and vehicles captured during their lightening advance through northern Iraq. However, the powerful American military machine appears to have had little impact. In July 2014, ISIS unilaterally declared an Islamic Caliphate. Shortly after rebranding itself the *Islamic State* (IS) and through means of a democratic *Shura* election, Abu Bakri Al-Baghdadi was appointed as Caliph (leader).¹²

The third tenet of the fundamentalist political ideology argues Jews and the state of Israel will never see peace. Financially and militarily supported by the US, Jews (who are consistently referred to as pigs, dogs and monkeys by fundamentalists) stand accused of stealing land, instigating global conflict and oppressing Palestinians. Entirely aligned with the proscribed Palestinian Terrorist group Hamas, British fundamentalists reject peace negotiations and call for the total eradication of Israel. In 2003, two men from the UK carried out a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on behalf of Hamas.¹³ Long term friends Asif Hanif, from Hounslow, West London, and Omar Sharif, from Derby were both committed Islamic fundamentalists regularly attending sermons delivered by preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri at Finsbury Park Mosque in East London. There is no public source evidence to suggest either man had previously visited Israel. Radicalisation therefore occurred far from Gaza or the West Bank. In fact, the decision to pursue terrorism occurred while they were in London, active within the fundamentalist movement and deeply under the influence of its political ideology.

¹⁰ Staff Reporter, 'Iraq crisis: US to send military advisers', *BBC News Online*, 20th June 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-27932443>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

¹¹ Staff Reporter, 'Iraq conflict: Obama vows to stop jihadist state', *BBC News Online*, 9th August 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-28723050>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Staff Reporter, 'Bomb Britons visited Gaza', *BBC News Online*, 5th May 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3001665.stm>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

The fourth tenet deals with the obligation commanding all able Muslims to pursue combative Jihad. Narratives within this tenet encourage fundamentalists to recognise that Jihad provides a mechanism in which they can channel anger and frustration built up from an appreciation of how the west has subjugated Islam and oppressed Muslims worldwide. British fundamentalists promote Jihad as the only viable solution to remove obstacles preventing the re-establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. Universally recognised even amongst moderate preachers, God has commanded Muslims to defend themselves and their religion from acts of aggression. In contrast with Christians, Muslims do not turn the other cheek. If an unbeliever throws a Muslim from his house, it falls upon co-religionists to throw the unbeliever out from his house.¹⁴ Since 2010, hundreds of British fundamentalists have travelled to Syria to engage in the civil war against President Assad.

The fifth and final tenet of the fundamentalist political ideology concerns the legitimacy of terrorism and suicide bombing. Controversial and far from universally accepted, preachers have sought to convince fundamentalists that under certain conditions, it is legitimate to target non-combatants. Through narratives constituting this tenet, preachers have used Islamic doctrine to construct a bridge between legitimate Jihad and potentially illegitimate terrorism. A common argument put forward proposes that since western civilians pay tax used to arm the military, they are as guilty of oppressing Muslims as the politicians they freely elect. By supporting the enemies of Islam, British citizens become legitimate targets for fundamentalist terrorists who perceive themselves as soldiers in a war between Islam and the West. Moderate British Muslims who engage in behaviour forbidden in Islam, for example drinking and dancing in nightclubs with the opposite sex also constitute legitimate targets. Empirical evidence suggests not all fundamentalists accept the proposed legitimacy of violence against non-combatants. Michael Adebajo chose not to kill any of the civilians standing beside him after he killed Soldier Lee Rigby in May 2013. Such reservation is clearly not universal given the numerous plots in which British fundamentalist Muslims have deliberately sought to kill civilians. Chapter 5

¹⁴ This core principle has its roots in the Quran and is used by extremist terrorists to legitimize attacks against western citizens at home. For example, it is argued that if British Soldiers carry out operations against Afghanistan citizens, it is religiously legitimate for Muslims to do the same back in the UK.

presents ten case studies in which fundamentalists have accepted the legitimacy of terrorism and sought to carry it out against innocent civilians.

It is important to acknowledge the significant influence fundamentalist preachers exercised over their followers. Young Muslims who typically knew little of their faith, could not speak Arabic and who for the most part had never stepped foot in either Pakistan or Afghanistan, held men like Omar Bakri Mohammed in great esteem. In February 2014, British-born Shoe bomber Saajid Muhammad Badat agreed to give evidence against fundamentalist preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri.¹⁵ Assistant US Prosecutor Ian McGinley stated that Badat would ‘show the court that Hamza was a terrorist leader of global reach, who among other things, sent his young lieutenants around the world to engage in terror training’.¹⁶ Fundamentalist Muslims who engaged in terrorism previously spent hours listening to sermons and reading extremist literature promoting the core tenets constituting the fundamentalist political ideology. Preachers used a variety of real world examples to reinforce the narratives that were progressively radicalising young British Muslims and pushing them towards jihad and terrorism. The July 2005 London bombers shared audiotapes of sermons delivered by Jamaican preacher Abdul Al-Faisal, and on a regular basis met up to discuss his ideas and their implications.¹⁷ The first major section of this chapter discusses the most important goal for every Islamic fundamentalist, namely to re-establish a Caliphate. So great is the desire to achieve this objective amongst British fundamentalist Muslims, that hundreds have flooded to Syria since 2011 in order to fight alongside the Islamic State.

Islamic Caliphate

The most persistent tenet of fundamentalist political ideology promotes the re-establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. In a video published by the *Islamic State* (formerly ISIS), British fundamentalist Abu Abdullah Al-Habashi tells viewers, ‘To

¹⁵ P. Thompson, ‘Shoe bomber’s accomplice to give evidence against Abu Hamza to prove he was a terrorist with global reach’, *Daily Mail Online*, 3rd February 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2551157/Shoe-bomber-accomplice-Badat-evidence-against-Abu-Hamza.html>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) et al [2009] EWCA Crim 2396

live by the Quran and the Sunnah, that is all we need as Muslims. We do not need democracy or communism; all we need is the Sharia'.¹⁸ Considered a primary objective, establishing the Caliphate provides the underlying motivation for every activity carried out by British fundamentalist Muslims. Only the Caliphate ruled according to Sharia can ensure true democracy, human rights and freedom from oppression. After overthrowing Muslim leaders who fail to govern according to Sharia, fundamentalists would then merge the host territory into the Caliphate. Understanding this tenet is important for understanding why British fundamentalists travel overseas to pursue jihad. Often it is while fighting with groups determined to establish a Caliphate, e.g. ISIS, when fundamentalists agree to return to the UK to pursue terrorism. Since 2013, the British government has strongly sought to deter this activity due to fears that jihadists trained in Syria, pose a potential terrorist threat upon their return.

Monotheism

Universally agreed upon by all Muslims is the proclamation that God is unitary and therefore has no associates. Known as monotheism, this belief causes the rejection of synthetic legislation in favour of Sharia. Theoretically, all observant Muslims moderate or fundamentalist desire Sharia as their overarching authority. Strictly forbidden, Muslims may not worship multiple gods (known as Shirk) or position themselves between fellow Muslims and God (like a King or a Dictator). Shirk can be in worship, obedience, love, trust and intention. Fundamentalists judge Muslim leaders who allow shirk and legislate over what God has commanded as apostates and therefore unfit to rule. Until the Arab Spring, fundamentalists despised leaders of Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Syria. Until his incarceration, Al-Masri consistently preached to fundamentalists that leaders of these countries had compromised on their religion in order to satisfy their own selfish egotistically desires. Acting from within the UK, preachers like Al-Masri recruited fighters and

¹⁸ M. Robinson, 'Shocking moment British jihadi fighting with Isis in Syria and Iraq stands in front of beheaded man and boasts its what people want to see', *Daily Mail Online*, 7th August 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2718816/Shocking-moment-British-jihadi-fighting-Isis-Iraq-stands-beheaded-man-boasts-s-people-want-see.html>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

financially supported insurgent groups engaged in campaigns to overthrow Middle Eastern dictators.

Reinforcing hatred of polytheism amongst fundamentalists, Al-Masri commonly highlights the divine rewards afforded those who fight against it. Writing in Issue five of *Al-Jihad* magazine, he rhetorically asks readers what is the key to paradise. ‘Undoubtedly it is the promotion of monotheism, believing, loving, and obeying Allah in a unique and perfect way to the best of one’s abilities’.¹⁹ Muslims must not worship anything other than God, ally themselves with enemies of Islam or permit blasphemy. Furthermore, Muslims must punish anyone who insults God or the Prophet Mohammed. Evidence demonstrating the strength of feeling concerning this narrative appears widespread. In March 2007, British fundamentalists received prison sentences due to their involvement in protests against cartoons satirising the Prophet Muhammad.²⁰ Abdul Muhid, 24, said to be the leader of the demonstration, chanted ‘Bomb, bomb the UK’ and waved placards with slogans such as ‘Annihilate those who insult Islam’. Other placards held by demonstrators included more graphic text, for example, ‘slay those who insult Islam’ and ‘butcher those who mock Islam’.²¹ The willingness of fundamentalists to incite murder demonstrates the importance of this narrative in constructing the mindset necessary to pursue terrorism. If British fundamentalists considered it legitimate to kill those who merely insult the Prophet Mohammed, there can be little doubt that a minority were ready to pursue terrorism in retaliation for the deaths of co-religionists by coalition airstrikes.

Universal adoption of Sharia

Between 1996 and 2001, the *Taliban* governed Afghanistan according to a strict interpretation of Sharia. Heralded by Islamic fundamentalists around the world, the Taliban enjoyed significant praise and assistance from Pakistan. Traumatized by

¹⁹ A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 5’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj05.html, (accessed 27th October 2014)

²⁰ Staff Reporter, ‘Four men jailed over cartoon demo’, *BBC News Online*, 18th July 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6904622.stm>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

²¹ T. Zada, ‘Photograph of Islamic fundamentalist Muslims in the UK protesting about the Danish cartoons in 2007’, *Private Blog*, http://tahseenz.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/danish_cartoon_protest.jpg, (accessed 27th October 2014)

decades of corruption, brutality and relentless civil war, Afghans initially welcomed their new rulers who brought order to the chaos. Religious zest for strictly implementing Sharia gradually made the Taliban unpopular. Many complained the majority of rules had no basis in either the Qur'an or the Hadiths. Observers questioned the legitimacy of leader Mullah Omar because he lacked scholarly learning, tribal pedigree and any genealogical connection to the Prophet Mohammed. Western fundamentalists however, considered life under the Taliban to be paradise on earth. Throughout *Al-Jihad* magazine, writers consistently praised the regime, raising its leaders up high amongst the global fundamentalist movement. Issue six; readers learn that religious police in Kabul are cracking down hard on beard trimmers.²² Al-Masri applauds the Taliban for taking steps towards the Sunnah by ending the practice of “designer beards”. Of significant relevance, praise for the Taliban appears in the court transcripts for several major UK terrorism trials. Clearly, British fundamentalists thought highly of the regime and would therefore have been particularly sensitive to western aggression that sought to undermine or remove it.

Giving evidence against five men accused of planning a bombing campaign in London in 2003/2004, fundamentalist turned prosecution witness, Junaid Babar, told the court it was the view of the defendants that by implementing Sharia, the Taliban had come the closest of any government to creating a perfect Islamic state.²³ Furthermore, evidence presented at the trial of three men accused of conspiring with the July 7th London bombers, indicates the conspirators and those around them widely approved of the Taliban. For example, asked by the prosecutor, ‘The Sharia that existed in Afghanistan at that stage, that was something that you approved of?’,²⁴ Defendant Wahid Ali replies, ‘Yeah, a hundred per cent, yes, I do.. ultimate aim was that they were establishing an Islamic Sharia, and that is a aim of every Muslim to live under the Sharia state’.²⁵ Western aggression against the Taliban and the ultimate decision to remove them in favour of a democratically elected government caused widespread derision amongst British fundamentalist Muslims. While hundreds

²² Al-Masri ‘Issue 5’

²³ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) et al [2009] EWCA Crim 2396. 223.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

travelled to the country to wage jihad against the occupying forces, only a minority ultimately became recruits for suicide bombing in the UK.

Although Muslims who fled Afghanistan complained that laws implemented by the Taliban had little basis in the Qur'an, fundamentalists considered the regime as revolutionary. Consequently, the Taliban received significant amounts of finance and equipment from fundamentalists in the UK who regularly travelled to the region in order to fight alongside veteran mujahedeen. The pursuit of jihad firstly occurred throughout the 1990s against the Northern Alliance who opposed the Taliban and later from 2001, against occupying US & UK forces. Without the political tenet encouraging support for the Caliphate and Sharia, British fundamentalists may not have felt so compelled to fight on behalf of the Taliban. Deprived of Afghanistan as a major theatre of operations for jihad, the recruitment of volunteers for suicide bombing in the UK may not have emerged.

Preachers like Abu Qatada, Al-Masri and Omar Bakri greatly influenced British fundamentalist Muslims. While many followers pursued Jihad in the various Islamic conflicts around the world, a minority adopted an extreme position and plotted acts of terrorism against fellow citizens. British Jihadists believed that to establish the Caliphate, they must first overthrow apostate Muslim leaders. As recently as 2013, Michael Adebajo had sought to pursue Jihad in Somalia and according to the speech he gave after killing Lee Rigby, this was because he was determined to live under Sharia but the west would not allow him and others like him to do so. In 2004, British fundamentalist Sulayman Keeler gave an interview to the BBC. Discussing politics and religion, he expressed strong opposition to fabricated democracy, which he argued, oppresses millions of people around the world.²⁶ Keeler went on to claim there is little difference between Tony Blair sending fighters jets to bomb Iraq and Bin Laden who sent planes into the twin towers. Four years later, police successfully prosecuted Keeler and several other fundamentalists for the offence of actively raising funds for terrorist purposes.

Overthrow apostate rulers

²⁶ Staff Reporter, 'Al-Muhajiroun', *BBC News Online*, 29th April 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/3670007.stm>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

Fundamentalists in the UK have long sought to remove Muslim leaders who fail to rule according to Sharia. Four countries in particular stand out as targets for regime change namely Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen. In the early days of the fundamentalist movement, preachers Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza Al-Masri were vocal supporters of the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA). In 1999, Yemeni police arrested the son of Al-Masri along with several other British Muslims whom they accused of terrorism. Ironically, at the time the family were outraged and called on the government to help free the ‘innocent young men’ held in terrible conditions in a foreign jail.²⁷ Subsequently, a public campaign supported in the media to ‘bring our boys home’ eventually led to their release. In contrast, after 9/11, the public had little sympathy for efforts to release British Muslims held in Guantanamo Bay. Today it appears that terrorist suspects are guilty until proven innocent.

Saudi Arabia

Since the fundamentalist movement first emerged in the UK, Saudi Arabia has been the number one target for regime change. In issue five of *Al-Jihad* magazine, the editor directs readers to question the level of debt held by the country and condemns vast sums of money spent on the country’s military. Al-Masri argues the anti-Islamic government procures arms only to maintain favour with the west that in return offer sufficient protection to keep them in power.²⁸ Fundamentalists refer to Saudi Arabia as the *Arab Peninsula*, entirely rejecting the legitimacy of the *Royal House of Saud*. By taking power, the Saudi King has positioned himself between fellow Muslims and God. Such an act is in defiance of the Quran specifically that God has no associates. Only an Islamic scholar elected by a council of elders may govern the Arab Peninsula according to Sharia. Universal amongst fundamentalists is a belief that the holy lands of Mecca and Medina are under the control of apostates. Unfit to rule this sacred region, the Saudi Royal family who are dependent on the west, continue to squander the country’s wealth in order to satisfy their own egoistical desires.

²⁷ Staff Reporter, ‘World: Middle East Yemen families demand meeting with Cook’, *BBC News Online*, 13th January 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/254288.stm, (accessed 28th October 2014)

²⁸ Al-Masri ‘Issue 5’

When invaded by Iraq, Kuwait quickly turned to the west. The United States and Great Britain liberated the country with logistical support from Saudi Arabia. More concerned with holding on to power than obeying Islamic law, the Saudi Royal family allowed foreign troops on the most sacred of Islamic land. There are several verses in the Quran which strictly forbid foreign armies from occupying the Arab Peninsula. In this situation, Muslims must fight militarily in order to remove them. The Saudi Royal family employ Islamic clerics loyal to the kingdom in order to provide the religious legitimacy for the presence of non-believers. Commonly this includes reference to the Hadiths and formation of military alliances by the Prophet Mohammed. Fundamentalists reject the legitimacy of any alliance between Saudi Arabia and the United States by reference to a surah in the Hadith of Adh-Dhahhak which states, "the Messenger of Allah went out on the day of Uhud, when all of a sudden there was a good squadron or a harsh squadron so he said: 'Who are these?' They said: 'The Jews of so and so.' So he said: 'We do not seek assistance of disbelievers.'"²⁹ Alliances can only form between those who believe in Allah.

Condemnation of the Saudi Royal Family is patently clear throughout discourse associated with the fundamentalist movement. Issue 10 of *Al-Jihad* magazine reports on a protest outside the Saudi Arabian Embassy.³⁰ Editor Al-Masri states the purpose of the demonstration was to highlight the continued abuse of Makkah and Madinah by the Royal family for personal and political gains. Al-Masri notes having met with other Islamic leaders in the UK to discuss ongoing campaigns to force the Saudi family from their un-Islamic tyrannical rule. Common amongst Islamic fundamentalists is the demand that western forces be expelled from the Arab Peninsula (Saudi Arabia). Allah commanded no two religions in the Arab Peninsula and that Jews and Christians flee the region until no one calls to anything except Islam.

²⁹ Staff Reporter, 'Islamic Ruling on Military Alliances', *Khilifah*, 26th June 2010, <http://www.khilafah.com/index.php/the-khilafah/foreign-policy/9740-islamic-ruling-on-military-alliances>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

³⁰ A. Al-Masri, 'Issue 11', *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj1.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

Egypt

Second only to Saudi Arabia, the Egyptian regime before 2011 was at the heart of Islamic revolution. Members of the fundamentalist movement in the UK accused former President Mubarak of committing crimes against innocent men, women and children throughout his decades in power. Torture in Egypt was commonplace and extended to family members of those accused of seeking to overthrow the incumbent government. Fundamentalists consistently sought to remove Mubarak and have him executed for his crimes against Islam and the Muslim nation. Ultimately the moderate rather than the fundamentalists achieved regime change in Egypt. After the leak of US diplomatic cables that revealed US dislike for Mubarak, mass protests erupted in Cairo and other Egyptian cities on 25 January 2011. A few weeks later after failing to quash the popular uprising, the despised dictator stood down leading to widespread celebrations.

Since the mid-1990s, fundamentalists in the UK regularly protested against the Egyptian regime. In October 1998, a commuter train crashed in Cairo, killing forty-five Muslim passengers. Fundamentalist preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri strongly condemned the Egyptian transport minister and suggested that if he were not part of the Mubarak regime, state prosecutors would almost certainly have pursued a charge of manslaughter against him.³¹ Directly accusing the Egyptian Government and President Mubarak of being institutionally corrupt, Al-Masri told followers that by investing in tourism over national infrastructure, the incumbent regime had demonstrated Muslim blood is cheaper than the blood of unbelievers. Until his detention, Al-Masri consistently incited followers to support all efforts to remove the Egyptian dictator who failed to govern according to Shariah.

Yemen

In the late 1990s, fundamentalists strongly vilified Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Issue five of *Al-Jihad* magazine published in 1999 celebrates an attack by the mujahedeen on an oil pipeline running south of the country.³² This incident was part of an overall campaign organised by the Sunni Islamic insurgent group Muslim Army

³¹ A. Al-Masri, 'Issue 0', *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, <http://www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj00.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

³² Al-Masri 'Issue 5'

of Abiyan (AOA). At the time, the AoA were engaged in an insurgency to remove the apostate government and establish an Islamic state governed according to Sharia. Writing in *Al-Jihad*, editor Al-Masri conveys a request from the AOA for British fundamentalists to volunteer for Jihad in Yemen. Specifically, 'Supporters of Sharia' (SOS) received statement number five from the army of Abiyan announcing and calling Muslim fighters to join their Jihad struggle and stop the invasion of the last state in the peninsular which is about to fall into the hands of the West'.³³

When SOS published issue five of *Al-Jihad* magazine in 1999, it was not yet a criminal offence to participate in a foreign insurgency or to encourage others. Al-Masri openly admitted he would like to see the Yemeni government ousted and defended the use of force as justifiably within Islamic doctrine.³⁴ What is significant about Yemen is that Al-Masri believed it offered the best possibility for establishing an Islamic state. Shortly after issuing the statement encouraging fundamentalists to volunteer for Jihad, Yemeni police arrested five young British Muslims accused of plotting a bombing campaign in the country. Al-Masri admitted to knowing two of the men involved, his son and stepson respectively. Fifteen years later the British government extradited Al-Masri to the United States in order to stand trial in relation to acts of terrorism in Yemen including the kidnap of sixteen western tourists.

The western war on Islam

As clearly detailed above, pursuing the re-establishment of an Islamic Caliphate is the primary objective for every fundamentalist Muslim in the UK. Proponents argue the west is on a mission to prevent this from ever occurring. Consequently, throughout political discourse attributable to the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*, followers consistently portray western nations as enemies of Islam. America in particular receives the most condemnation, described by fundamentalists as "The Great Shaytan" (devil). In literature, public speeches and private sermons, preachers adopt various historical and contemporary examples to show how the west has suppressed Islam in order to prevent the re-establishment of a Caliphate. In order for Muslims to

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Staff Reporter, 'UK Detained Britons 'linked' to militants', *BBC News Online*, 12th January 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/253429.stm>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

legitimately fight against the west, a state of war must exist between them, hence the strong promotion of this narrative amongst the fundamentalist movement. A number of key events provide the necessary evidence used to establish this tenet within fundamentalist political ideology. From the 1990s sanctions against Iraq, to the breakup of Yugoslavia, these actions help build narratives in which Islam faces an existential threat. Retaliation is paramount, Islam demands that all British Muslims fight back in order to defend their religion against western aggression. Fundamentalists in the UK, who have pursued terrorism, consistently discuss the narrative in which preachers argue co-religionists face oppression by a crusading western alliance. It is therefore critical to understand this tenet of the fundamentalist political ideology in order to develop counter narratives in which British Muslims are able to appreciate that western intervention is more commonly designed to end conflict in the Middle East rather than fuel it.

Five days after the terrorist attack on 11th September 2001, Al-Mujihaaroon (ALM) held a demonstration against the impending assault on Afghanistan.³⁵ The protest titled “USA at War with Islam” sought to invoke strong emotions amongst fundamentalists and build up widespread opposition to western retaliation. Under threat from the United States, Pakistani President Musharaf pledged to support the US-led alliance against what he termed “Islamic Fundamentalists”. Preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed suggested at the time that war between Islam and the west now appeared inevitable. In announcing the demonstration, ALM claimed that, ‘far from fighting terrorism, something the US supports through the Israelis and the IRA, the actual motivation for the imminent invasion of Afghanistan is to prevent the Taliban from fully establishing Sharia in the country’.³⁶ By suggesting the west is seeking to prevent the Taliban from taking complete control of Afghanistan, fundamentalists in both groups, ALM and SOS, appear entirely aligned in terms of political ideology. Previously in 1998, leader of SOS, Al-Masri, spoke of how UN sanctions on Afghanistan were designed to hinder the Taliban who were now close to defeating the western backed *Northern Alliance*. Post 9/11, the entire fundamentalist movement in the UK unified on the belief that the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan concerned the

³⁵ O. Mohammed, ‘USA at War with Islam’, *Al-Muhajiroon*, 16th September 2001, No longer online but archive copy available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

³⁶ *Ibid.*

suppression of Islam and removal of the Taliban, rather than any attempt to hunt down Osama Bin Laden.

Breakup of Yugoslavia

From February 1998 to June 1999, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fought a war of independence from Yugoslavia. Armed insurgency led to a vicious military clampdown by government security forces orchestrated by alleged war criminal Slobodan Milosevic. Officially, accusations of ethnic cleansing eventually forced NATO intervention on the side of the KLA. Refugees who fled to the UK informed members of the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* about horrific war crimes committed by Serbian forces. Although NATO intervention in Serbia and Kosovo is widely considered to have been humanitarian, fundamentalists suggest a more realist motive. In the first issue of *Al-Jihad* magazine published in 1998, editor and noted preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri, outlines the fundamentalist position.³⁷ He argues that US and Europe only intervened because ‘they feared that if the democracy loving KLA were defeated, it would allow the Islamic mujahedeen veterans of Bosnia to get involved and restore law and order by means of the Quran and the AK47’.³⁸

Al-Masri proclaims that god willing, the Balkans will eventually be as the west fears most, ‘in the hands of the Mujahedeen and under the discipline of the Quran’.³⁹ In 1995, after the US negotiated a settlement to the Bosnian conflict (Daytona), foreign mujahedeen units were required to disband and leave the Balkans. This decision to weaken the defensive capability of Muslims in the region appears highly contentious. During the ensuing war in Kosovo, Serbian forces destroyed 40% of the country’s Mosques. To fundamentalists in the UK, the decision to downgrade Muslim defences and the consequential assault on places of worship, strongly demonstrate the western preoccupation with the rise of Islam over the obligation to prevent genocide. Overall, events in Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s provide the

³⁷ A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 1’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj01.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

basis for a general narrative in which western humanitarian intervention offers sufficient cover to inhibit attempts to re-establish a Caliphate.

Algerian insurgency – the GIA

Beside Kosovo, politics in Algeria towards the late 1990s also strongly influenced fundamentalist discourse. Following decades of brutal French occupation, the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA) sought to establish an Islamic state. In 1992, when the GIA were poised to gain power, the military intervened, cancelled elections, and imprisoned officers of the party.⁴⁰ France stood accused of instigating the events and shortly afterwards, the GIA began a sustained terrorist campaign. Attacks included the 1994 hijacking of Air France Flight 8969 and the 1995 bombing of the Paris Metro. Although predominantly seen as a French issue, members of the fundamentalist movement accused both the UK and the US of being complicit in cancelling the elections thus preventing the GIA from legitimately gaining power.⁴¹ To Muslims living in London, events in Algeria offered prima facie evidence that the west would not tolerate a powerful Islamic Caliphate even if the people were to vote for it democratically. Thereafter members of the fundamentalist movement offered vocal, financial and military provision to the GIA. So overt in their support, throughout the 1990s French media consistently accused London of being ‘a sanctuary for terrorists associated with the GIA’.⁴² In response to the metro bombing, a leading French newspaper claimed terrorists planned the massacres while sitting on the banks of the Thames and urged Britain to crack down on London based supporters.⁴³

In the run up to the 1998 World Cup, several European countries arrested over a hundred alleged members of the GIA. Of the fifty-six detained in France, courts

⁴⁰ Contemporary parallels drawn in the case of the Egyptian Brotherhood in 2012 who gained power but were then ousted by the American financed Egyptian military in a coup that led to the imprisonment of President Morsi and thousands of members of the brotherhood

⁴¹ A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 2’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj02.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁴² Staff Reporter, ‘EU-Algeria talks focus on massacres’, *CNN News Online*, 20th January 1998, <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9801/20/algeria/>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁴³ *Ibid.*

failed to prosecute a single detainee for terrorist offences. Fundamentalists deplore this event labelling it a gratuitous act of aggression against innocent Muslims. Shortly after French police released the prisoners, Al-Masri wrote in *Al-Jihad* magazine warning European nations from interfering in Islamic Holy war now raging in Algeria.⁴⁴ Further construction of the fundamentalist political narrative in which the west are accused of being at war with Islam concerns the Paris massacre of 1961. Al-Masri accuses the French of genocide, a brutal slaughter of Muslims undertaken without any condemnation from either the US or the UK.

Failing to make progress against the incumbent government, the GIA insurgency gradually became more brutal. Towards the end of the 1990s, accusations surfaced that the GIA were massacring innocent Algerian villagers who refused to pledge their allegiance. Despite protestations of a “false flag” operation, fundamentalists in London were not convinced the GIA were entirely blameless. Abu Qatada believed the insurgents were at least partially responsible for the deaths of civilians and consequently ended his vocal support for the group. This decision is of particular interest. Contrary to reports surrounding the Jordanian cleric, by ending support for the GIA, the implication is that Qatada does not necessarily agree with violence against non-combatants, Muslim non-combatants at least. With Qatada distancing himself from the GIA, hard-line supporters predominantly from North Africa appear to have drifted towards Al-Masri. We know from MI5 agent Omar Nasiri, that GIA supporters began attending sermons by Al-Masri at Finsbury Park Mosque. Behind closed doors the preacher told followers the Algerian government was behind the terrorist violence in order to erode support for the GIA. In the eighth issue of *Al-Jihad* magazine, he claims the Algerian government carried out the murders using soldiers dressed as mujahedeen.⁴⁵ To fundamentalists, this was yet further evidence of how the west ignores genocide in order to allow the continued subjugation of Islam.

⁴⁴ Al-Masri ‘Issue 2’

⁴⁵ This is often referred to as “false flag” operation in which government forces commit an atrocity in the hope it will be blamed on their enemies, thereby weakening support amongst the population. A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 8’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj08.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

Continued acts of brutality in Algeria conducted by the GIA eventually forced even Al-Masri to concede fundamentalist support. Under pressure from non-GIA followers, he acknowledged the group were responsible for killing fellow Muslims and thereafter disassociated entirely. From the eighth issue of *Al-Jihad* magazine, which leads with an article entitled “Europe Hates Islam” to the final issue, there is no further mention of the GIA or indeed Algeria. Instead, the focus has switched largely to Chechnya and Yemen. Al-Masri believed that Yemen held the greatest prospect for re-establishing the Islamic Caliphate and thus pushed his followers to support insurgency in the country. Although the GIA lost support within the UK, fundamentalists continue to use the abandoned elections in 1992 as evidence that western nations in particular France, are willing to renegade on democracy in order to prevent Islamic fundamentalists from ever gaining power.

Pharmaceutical factory in Sudan

In August 1998, the United States bombed a medicine factory in Muslim dominated Sudan. Based on CIA intelligence suggesting the location had traces of a pre-cursor for the nerve agent VX Gas, President Bill Clinton ordered a missile strike. The incident was highly controversial and eventually led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Sudanese citizens who relied on the factory for simple medicines. Intelligence analyst Mary McCarthy opposed the strike, voicing doubts over the alleged connection to Al-Qaeda and claims the factory had been involved in the production of chemical weapons. Christopher Hitchens wrote at the time that the factory, ‘could have been folded like a tent and spirited away in a day or so... Well then, what was the hurry? ... There is really only one possible answer to that question. Clinton needed to look 'presidential' for a day’.⁴⁶ At the time, Clinton faced accusations of impropriety with an intern, namely Monica Lewinsky. Despite the ensuing controversy, the US failed to supply medicines previously manufactured at the factory. In effect, tens of thousands of Sudanese men, women, and children died because the President acted on faulty intelligence in order to divert attention away from his own impropriety.

Fundamentalists use the 1998 bombing of Sudan to help demonstrate US aggression and continued subjugation of Islam. In a 1998 article entitled “The latest

⁴⁶ C. Hitchens, ‘They bomb pharmacies don’t they’, *Salon*, 23rd September 1998, http://www.salon.com/1998/09/23/news_114, (accessed 28th October 2014)

conflict; America vs Islam”, Al-Masri claims the bombing in Sudan terrorised and killed civilians through long-term deprivation of much needed medicines.⁴⁷ Quoting a US republican official who said at the time, ‘The US has now unilaterally and effectively declared war on all civilian and security targets in Muslim countries’, Al-Masri easily builds on the narrative that argues the west is at war with Islam.⁴⁸ Importantly, this article concludes by highlighting how recently elected British Prime Minister Tony Blair gave his strong, uncritical support of US aggression against Sudan. Barely a year in office and fundamentalists in the UK consider the leader of America’s greatest ally to be an enemy of Islam. As early as 1998, trusted preachers in London were using the bombing of Sudan to convince followers that war now existed between the west and Islam. Having accepted such state of affairs, preachers encourage followers to think of themselves as soldiers and to do whatever they could to help bring about victory for Islam. In practice, this meant fundraising for the mujahedeen and volunteering for combative Jihad wherever the need appeared greatest.

Western occupation of Afghanistan

The 2001 invasion and long term occupation of historical Muslim land has been discussed in almost every major UK terrorism trial since 2004. Political narratives that encouraged British fundamentalists to carry out suicide bombings against fellow citizens were in fact, constructed many years before 9/11. As early as 1998, preachers were encouraging fundamentalists to demonstrate against a proposed UN arms embargo on Afghanistan. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan argued the sanction was necessary in order to help stem the civil war raging across the country. Fundamentalists appeared deeply sceptical of Annan and questioned his sudden decision to act despite the previous ten years of conflict. In Issue 8 of *Al-Jihad* magazine, Al-Masri rejects any suggestion the embargo is about peace, claiming that just like in Kosovo, whenever Muslims appear poised to win a war, the UN intervenes against them.⁴⁹ Underlying his argument, Al-Masri notes that when the Taliban

⁴⁷ A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 4’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj04.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Al-Masri ‘Issue 8’

controlled less than half of Afghanistan, there appeared to have been no attempt to intervene. In contrast, with the Taliban now governing 85% of the land and implementing Sharia, suddenly there becomes an impetus to act. From a modern perspective, after the Syrian insurgent group ISIS gained significant territory in Syria and Iraq, the leader Abu Bakri al-Baghdadi declared an Islamic Caliphate. Immediately afterwards, US, French and UK forces began a series of air strikes designed to debilitate the organisation and allow Syrian government soldiers to regain the upper hand. Fundamentalists perceive such acts to be further evidence of a western war on Islam designed to prevent the re-establishment of an Islamic Caliphate.

In conjunction with the proposed UN arms embargo, the European Union also demanded that Pakistan halt its supply of oil to the country. These two acts of western interference into the affairs of a Muslim country caused widespread anger throughout the UK fundamentalist movement. Failure to recognise and respect the Taliban as a legitimate government, offered yet more evidence of the perceived war against Islam. Preachers told followers that by seeking to implement sanctions against the Taliban, there could be little doubt the Judeo-Christian west held Islam in contempt. Former home secretary David Blunkett has said the Taliban regime was entirely rejected by the Labour government under Tony Blair, 'apart from being a very unpleasant, deeply unpleasant regime, they [Taliban] also hosted forces that were anti the west'.⁵⁰ Unlike Muslim countries where puppet dictators kept Islamic fundamentalists from gaining power, Afghanistan offered western Muslims the opportunity to experience life under Shariah. Encouraged by Al-Masri, Qatada and Bakri-Mohammed, hundreds of British Muslims left relatively comfortable lives in the UK to train and fight alongside Taliban forces in Afghanistan.

After 9/11, the United States government no longer distinguished between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. In its annual terrorism report, US diplomats ask what action the British government has taken against the two groups. Evidently aligned with the revised narrative, diplomats reported to Washington that UK ministers and their department had given 'complete support to action taken against both Al-Qaeda and the Taliban'. There appears to be no recognition of Afghanistan as a sovereign state or any suggestion that the extradition of Osama Bin Laden should be conducted through

⁵⁰ Blunkett *Author Interview*

established international diplomacy. Before the subsequent US led invasion in 2001, British Muslims were providing finance and equipment to Taliban fighters.

Governed according to Sharia, British fundamentalists perceived Afghanistan as paradise, an Islamic state where they could eventually settle down and raise a family. Michael Adebolajo referenced his love of life under Sharia immediately after killing Lee Rigby. Speaking into the smart phone of a passer-by, he appears to be remonstrating with the British Government when he says, 'so what if want to live by the sharia in Muslim lands'.⁵¹ In 2001, police charged another prominent fundamentalist and member of Al-Muhajiroon, Yasser Al-Siri, with conspiracy to murder. Detained in relation to the assassination of Afghanistan Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud, police considered Al-Siri to be a primary suspect.⁵² Although police later dropped the charges, siding with the moderate Northern Alliance who controlled less than 20% of Afghanistan, this offered further evidence of UK government bias against the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

Undoubtedly, the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan strongly reinforced the narrative pushed by Al-Masri, that there existed a western war against Islam. Leader of the 2004 fertilizer bomb plot, Omar Khyam, absolutely held this view. During cross-examination about the politics of the fundamentalist movement, he is asked by the prosecutor, 'once the war is going on [Afghanistan], how is that being portrayed, in a sentence, generally in the publications you were reading, sermons you were hearing and the like?' Demonstrating the political narrative of the fundamentalist movement to which he belongs, Khyam replies, 'the war in Afghanistan was seen as a war on Islam and Muslims'.⁵³ Later in his testimony, Khyam tells the court that after meeting with his uncles who worked in the Pakistani security services, 'he was more convinced than ever that there existed a war on Islam'.⁵⁴ The four men who carried

⁵¹ A. Bond, 'Video: Gruesome footage showed a blood-stained Michael Adebolajo shortly after butchering Lee Rigby', *Mirror Online*, 19th December 2013, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/lee-rigby-murder-trial-gruesome-2943281>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁵² T. Whitehead, 'Qatada associate will stay in UK, court signals', *The Telegraph Online*, 21st November 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/9693489/Qatada-associate-will-stay-in-UK-court-signals.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁵³ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007] EWCA Crim 1612, 1933.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

out the 2005 suicide bombing on the London transport network all appear to have shared the view put forth by Khyam. At the trial of three men accused of being part of the wider 7/7 terrorist cell, defendant Wahid Ali is asked by the prosecutor if he is of the view that Islam is under attack.⁵⁵ Ali replies that in some states it is, because ‘what happened in 9/11, fair do’s, a Muslim did it, and it was some fringe of Al Qaeda who did it, but you go into Afghanistan and destroying the Sharia, I believe that was to destroy Islam, yeah’.⁵⁶ Ali is saying that he can understand retaliation for the terrorist attack in New York, the invasion of Afghanistan served not as retaliation but as part of a long-term strategy to subjugate Islam.

Eventually cleared of any involvement in the London bombings, Ali and one of his co-defendants were however jailed for having previously attended terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. Cross-examination established the men were close friends of Mohammed Sidique Khan. Within this social circle, members adopted several narratives promoted by fundamentalist preachers. In response, they regularly sent finance and equipment to the Taliban and even travelled to the region in the hope of fighting alongside the Mujahedeen. This example adds weight to the proposition that the political ideology associated with the fundamentalist movement has directly influenced those who have later gone on to pursue terrorism. In the case of the London bombers, the most important narratives are those concerning the perceived western war on Islam.

Officially, the US led invasion of Afghanistan concerned the hunt for Al-Qaeda leader and alleged mastermind of 9/11, Saudi born Osama Bin Laden. In practice, the mission quickly morphed into a long-term campaign designed to effect regime change. President Bush unilaterally declared that Islamic fundamentalist groups seeking to re-establish the Caliphate could no longer use Afghanistan as a base of operations. Commenting on the pursuit of Bin Laden, Al-Masri suggested that it suited American interests for him to remain at large. In particular, it justified the continued war on terrorism and served to legitimise the ongoing occupation of Afghanistan, long after Bin Laden had mysteriously evaded capture in the mountains of Tora Bora. Fundamentalists considered that Islam and terrorism had now become synonymous in the minds of tax paying western citizens. By fuelling their fear of

⁵⁵ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) et al [2009] p.297

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Islam, Al-Masri claims the British government were able to carry out actions not tolerated by any other minority in the UK. Again, further evidence of how the fundamentalist movement constructs and propagates the narrative in which Muslims are being victimised by a brutal, crusading west, hell-bent on eradicating Islam. Consistent with the “show and tell” radicalisation process, Al-Masri and others like him draw attention to perceived acts of aggression by western governments. Having set up the ‘show’, fundamentalists then receive the ‘tell’. Specifically that the only legitimate Islamic response to what they have learned is combative Jihad. More importantly, if required, these Muslims should be willing to give up their lives defending Islam.

Iraq pre and post 9/11

Similar to Afghanistan, fundamentalists use historical and contemporary events in Iraq to help construct various narratives within their political ideology. In the sixth and seventh issues of *Al-Jihad* magazine published around 1998, Al-Masri again declares that America and Britain are at war with Islam.⁵⁷ Referencing Operation Desert Fox (a bombing campaign against Saddam Hussain in 1998), he draws attention to the fact that in just four nights, ‘crusading forces fired more missiles than during the entire Gulf War’.⁵⁸ Use of the historically emotive term “crusading” is deliberate. Al-Masri promotes a narrative suggesting events in Iraq are religiously motivated, a continuation of the Christian war against Islam that began centuries earlier. Fundamentalists in the UK are encouraged to recognise the bombing of Iraq within a wider context. Specifically, that enforcement of the no-fly zone is part of the western campaign to suppress Islam. Therefore, even if they dislike Saddam Hussain, they have a duty as Muslims to act according to what Allah has commanded in the Quran – fight those who fight against Muslims.

It is important to note here that Osama Bin Laden recognised the need to liberate Kuwait from the occupying Iraqi army. President Saddam Hussain failed to

⁵⁷ A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 6’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj06.html, (accessed 28th October 2014); A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 7’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj07.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

rule according to Sharia and was therefore highly unpopular amongst Islamic fundamentalists. In Issue seven of *Al-Jihad*, the author describes Hussain as a non-Muslim dictator helped in power by one of the biggest enemies of Islam, the former Soviet Union.⁵⁹ Fundamentalists accuse the apostate leader of systematically removing Islamic law from the country and continuing to oppress Muslims with the aid and blessing of the enemies of Islam. In particular, he tortured his own people and of working with the west (through the corrupted Oil for Food programme) to deprive the area of money, dignity, safety, and above all Islam. While British fundamentalists clearly rejected Saddam Hussain, they spurned western attempts to undermine and eventually overthrow him.

Discourse associated with the fundamentalist movement consistently highlights the impact of sanctions against Iraq. In issue thirteen of *Al-Jihad* magazine, the editor claims that as many as 5000 children die in Iraq every month from starvation. 'Two million lives have been lost since the United Nations acting as the world's police, poured out a torrent of fire over the skies of Iraq'.⁶⁰ Intricately woven into examples of how the west is guilty of suppressing Islam, are various references to the Quran and Hadiths. In discussing sanctions against Iraq, Al-Masri claims that Allah told the Muslims 'the Christians and Jews will never cease attacking you, until you turn your back away from your religion'.⁶¹ The act of aligning political narratives with text in the Quran as well as contemporary events in Iraq appears designed to position everything within a divine context. Fundamentalist preachers want to show that war between Islam and the west is pre-ordained thereby encouraging Muslims to recognise their divine duty and act accordingly.

Chastising those who claim to support Saddam, Al-Masri asks why they have done nothing to prevent US airstrikes. Questioning this apparent paralysis, he attempts to humiliate the Iraqi population by highlighting how, 'Mujahedeen all over the world are doing *operations* against the US and the UK in retaliation for events in Iraq'. The suggestion is that Muslims who may not even be in the region or directly affected by events in Iraq, are still willing to fulfil their duty of defending co-

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ A. Al-Masri, 'Issue 13', *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj3.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

religionists. Although it appears Sunni Muslims living in Iraq are the primary target of this rhetoric, at the time there was almost no universal access to the Internet. Al-Masri had mainly sought to influence fundamentalist Muslims in the UK. As his primary audience, they were encouraged to reflect on what they were doing to help end western aggression against Iraq. In Issue 7 of *Al-Jihad*, Al-Masri argues the continued air strikes on military and civilian targets in Iraq now amounts to genocide. At least five years before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the members of the fundamentalist movement were using the impact of Western sanctions on the civilian population to help construct the narrative encouraging British Muslims to pursue Jihad. Al-Masri concludes his discussion about the lack of direct action against the west by stating, ‘the Kuffar West is once again attacking the Ummah with full force and no opposition, but for a few words of protest sounding from the mouths of a handful. The Ummah is in a pitiful state, and it is imperative that awake from our state of slumber, and put effort in to stopping them.’⁶² There can be little doubt from even the most cursory analysis of what Al-Masri wrote in 1999, that he supported British fundamentalists who wanted to pursue Jihad in order to fight back against the western war on Islam.

The term “shock and awe” commonly describe the initial air campaign that served as a precursor to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The world watched on television as the American military machine quickly devastated targets all over capital city Baghdad. Speaking publically just before his arrest, the man responsible for the May 2013 killing of soldier Lee Rigby, references the historical and contemporary bombing of Iraq. Highlighting the impact or “collateral damage” referred to by the military when they carry out airstrikes, Abebalajo asks, ‘When you drop a bomb, do you think it hits one person, or rather your bomb wipes out a whole family?’⁶³ Politically active within the fundamentalist movement for many years, Adebajo discussed events in Iraq at great length with his peers. It is entirely plausible that his decision to act came about because of guilt, of his failure to travel to Somalia and die on the battlefield fighting alongside Al-Shaabaab. Other fundamentalists responsible for extremist terrorism have also discussed western aggression against Iraq, in particular airstrikes. Convicted in relation to the 2006 transatlantic bomb plot, cell

⁶² Al-Masri ‘Issue 7’

⁶³ Bond ‘Video: Gruesome footage showed a blood-stained Michael Adebolajo shortly after butchering Lee Rigby’

member Umar Islam says in his martyrdom video, ‘as you bomb, you will be bombed. As you kill, you will be killed. And if you want to kill our women and children then the same thing will happen to you.’⁶⁴

Domestic counter terrorism strategy

In the UK, fundamentalists argue the western war against Islam begins at home. Beyond the narratives concerning the global subjugation of Islam by the west, fundamentalists have actively campaigned against domestic counter terrorism legislation which they argue unfairly affects the Muslim community. On 23rd of September 1998, officers from the London Met’s counter terrorism unit arrested seven Muslims with alleged links to Osama Bin Laden.⁶⁵ Reacting to the incident Al-Masri claimed it was politically motivated and that ‘the UK government does not realise they if they push someone far enough, that person who was not an enemy of them will end up becoming one’.⁶⁶ Consistent with claims that Al-Masri never directly incited followers to attack the UK, this statement shows he had no problem doing so indirectly. The following year, in 1999, fundamentalists in the UK met to discuss the 2000 Terrorism Act. Accusing the British government of oppression, they argued the bill sought to limit the freedom of Muslims and prevent them from supporting legitimate Jihad and the universal adoption of Sharia. Raising the issue of double standards, Al-Masri points to the billions of dollars given to Israel by the west, a government he accuses of terrorising Palestinian civilians through continued occupation. In concluding his commentary of the counter terrorism arrests, Al-Masri claims that despite attempts to portray Sharia as evil and backward, Muslims have recently shown an awakening for its legitimacy. He claims that in response, the UK and US governments have introduced anti “Terrorism” legislation designed specifically to prevent growing support for Islamic fundamentalism amongst Muslims living in the West.

⁶⁴ Staff Reporter, ‘Suicide Videos: What they Said’, *BBC News Online*, 4th April 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7330367.stm>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁶⁵ W. Hoge, ‘Britain Arrests 7 Suspected Of Links To Bin Laden’, *The New York Times Online*, 24th September 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/24/world/britain-arrests-7-suspected-of-links-to-bin-laden.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁶⁶ Al-Masri ‘Issue 0’

The use of anti-terrorism legislation to suppress Islam domestically and internationally appears in discourse relating to the civil war in Syria. Since 2010, insurgent groups have fought to overthrow the regime of President Assad. Those who publically declare they are Islamic fundamentalists and want to establish a Caliphate face proscription as terrorists. At the same time, moderate nationalist groups enjoy free reign to attract overseas support in terms of finance and equipment. Although non-government organisations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) accuse both types of insurgent groups of committing terrorism, it appears political ideology determines their legitimacy in the eyes of the west. Upon aligning themselves with the overall ideology of Al-Qaeda, western nations immediately proscribed the Syrian insurgent group Al-Nusra Front as a terrorist organisation. Other groups who profess to want to establish an Islamic state in Syria are equally ostracised whether they have links or have pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda or not. Condemning what they see as double standards over the interpretation of what constitutes a terrorist group, fundamentalists suggest that Syria provides prima facie evidence of their complaint. They ask if the west is against terrorism, why do they make a distinction between those promoting Sharia and those claiming to want secular liberal democracy. Are fundamentalists correct when they argue the west is actively suppressing Islam because it fears the establishment of an Islamic State in Syria? In February 2014, Sue Hemming head of counter-terrorism at the UK crown prosecution service, said even 'freedom fighters' that wanted to defeat 'loathsome' dictators such as Syrian President Bashar Assad would be dealt with 'robustly' when they returned to the UK.⁶⁷

On the 4th of April 2002, the fundamentalist group Al-Muhajiroon (ALM) issued a press release regarding the conviction of one of its followers.⁶⁸ Found guilty of inciting racial hatred, prosecutors claim Iftikar Ali distributed leaflets that included text from a Hadith that concerned fighting and killing Jews. Responding to the conviction, leaders of ALM suggest that under new anti-terrorism and race hate laws,

⁶⁷ H. Harkell, 'Travel to Syria to fight and be jailed for LIFE warns top prosecutor as authorities try to stem tide of young Britons joining rebels against Assad', *Daily Mail Online*, 3rd February 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2551020/Travel-Syria-fight-jailed-LIFE-warns-prosecutor-authorities-try-stem-tide-young-Britons-joining-rebels-against-Assad.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁶⁸ O. Mohammed, 'UK Judge Outlaws Qur'an and Hadith Judge Jeremy McMullen calls Allah and his Messenger (saw) Abusive and insulting', *Al-Muhajiroon*, 4th April 2002, No longer online but archive copy available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

it had become an offence to distribute or quote the Quran and the Hadiths. Freedom of religion was under threat. Omar Bakri argued that God has commanded Muslims to fight and defend their property, honour and lives when attacked. In sharing this with others, they claim to be merely following their religion. Somewhat sensationally, the group goes on to accuse the British government of following a path that may eventually lead to a ban on people from having the Quran and Hadith collections in their homes. Although this proposition is unfounded, to impressionably young fundamentalists emotionally charged by the invasion of Afghanistan, it would almost certainly have helped embed within their minds the narrative in which a crusading Judeo-Christian west is actively suppressing Islam.

Later in the press release, the author claims the British government plans to secularise the minority of fundamentalist Muslims in the UK who want to obey Allah and his messenger without compromise. Again, this baseless rhetoric helps to reinforce the narrative amongst members of the fundamentalist movement that the so-called war on terrorism goes far beyond eradicating Al-Qaeda. What it is actually seeking to achieve is the abolition of Islam in favour of liberal democracy worldwide. In this scenario, the west has reduced Islam to nothing more than individual worship. Evidence to support the argument that fundamentalists believed the British government were oppressing Muslims and harbingering them towards secularism appears throughout the discourse. Fundamentalist Michael Adebajo certainly held this view; ‘we swear by the Almighty Allah we will never stop fighting you until you leave us alone’.⁶⁹

The final press release from ALM, issued on the 23rd of January 2003 discusses a recent Police raid on Finsbury Park Mosque.⁷⁰ Speaking to the BBC, the resident Imam, Abu Hamza Al-Masri, claimed the action was part of Tony Blair's war against UK Muslims.⁷¹ Aligned with this proposition, Omar Bakri Mohammed suggests this ‘grotesque intrusion of a sacred building is an escalation of the black

⁶⁹ Bond ‘Video: Gruesome footage showed a blood-stained Michael Adebajo shortly after butchering Lee Rigby’

⁷⁰ O. Mohammed, ‘Finsbury Park Raid More Dirty Tricks’, *Al-Muhajiroon*, 23rd January 2003, No longer online but archive copy available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

⁷¹ Staff Reporter, ‘Anti-terror police raid London mosque’, *BBC News Online*, 20th January 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2675223.stm>, (accessed at 28th October 2014)

propaganda war against Muslims and Islam in the West'. As they had done in a December 2002 press release, ALM continues to push the narrative that Judeo-Christian crusaders have declared war against Islam and Muslims.⁷² Potentially seen as inciting violence, the press release references the Prophet Mohammed who said that 'the Mosque has more sanctity than the home and whoever dies defending his wealth, life, ideology or family is a martyr'.⁷³ With War in Iraq looming heavy on the horizon, Bakri suggests the raid is part of an overall government attempt to construct widespread fear about Islam amongst the population. By doing so, public support for ousting Saddam Hussain whom Blair accuses of financing terrorism in the west will hopefully grow. Bakri is clear about the hidden agenda of the British government and proclaims, 'the truth is the first casualty of War and the frenzied insults to Muslims is merely a smokescreen for the military build up in Iraq'.⁷⁴

Bakri concludes his statement by declaring that Bush and Blair are ready to commit mass murder. Unquestionably, the objective is to incite feelings of humiliation and despair amongst the UK fundamentalist movement. Suggesting that even so called "moderates" cannot withstand the western contempt for Islam, Bakri reduces the issue to a simply battle between good and evil, a fight that all Muslims are commanded by God to engage in. The press release concludes with a warning, 'ordinary people of the West should know what is being done in their name and the terrible price that may have to be paid when the victims have no more blood to shed and nothing to lose but their honour'. Although it appears clear, the authors of the press release fully expect some kind of violent reaction to any invasion of Iraq, publically these men claim ignorance when accused of constructing an environment conducive to terrorism in the UK.

Throughout the first section of this chapter, it has been have shown how fundamentalists constructed a narrative in which the west stand accused of waging war against Islam. Consequently, all Muslims are required to take up arms in defence of their co-religionists. Somewhat disingenuously, fundamentalists have discredited western acts of humanitarian interventions since the early 1990s, labelling them as

⁷² O. Mohammed, 'Camp X-Ray', *Al-Muhajiroon*, 24th December 2002, No longer online but archive copy available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

⁷³ O. Mohammed 'Finsbury Park Raid More Dirty Tricks'

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

neo-colonialist attempts to interfere in Muslim countries. Empirical evidence demonstrates a basis for complaints made by the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* in the UK. As of January 2014, the Egyptian Brotherhood, a moderate Islamic Party that legitimately gained power in 2013, was outlawed and their leader imprisoned. Although Mubarak is no longer in power, the US financed military remains in control of the country. Directed by the west, the Egyptian military continues to rule the country preventing any attempt by Islamic fundamentalists from gaining power.

Jews and the state of Israel will never enjoy peace

British Islamic fundamentalists strive to establish a caliphate in the face of western hostility. One of the main reasons to prevent the rise of Islam concerns the potential threat a caliphate would pose to the peace and security of Israel. Consequently, the third and perhaps most controversial tenet of fundamentalist political ideology deals with hatred towards Jews and the alleged illegal state of Israel. In 2006, prosecutors successfully convicted preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri of promoting various anti-Semitic narratives. Derogatorily referred to as pigs, dogs and monkeys, fundamentalists accuse Jews of stealing land and oppressing Palestinians with full financial and military backing from the US. Aligned with the political manifesto of Gaza based proscribed terrorist group Hamas, the UK based fundamentalist movement reject any negotiated settlement and call for the total eradication of the Israel state. Conflict in the Middle East and particularly the occupation of Palestine is central to the fundamentalist mindset. British Muslims who pursue terrorism commonly discuss how Israel is responsible for crimes against humanity. Consequently, in order to stem the growing number of adherents to fundamentalism, which in turn provides potential recruits for terrorism, it is necessary to understand the narratives associated with this tenet.

The link between anti-Jewish & anti-Israel narratives pushed by fundamentalists, and acts of terrorism are significant. Firstly, conspirators responsible for the 2004 fertilizer plot were devout fundamentalists and at least two fully supported Palestinian suicide bombing in Israel. In an email recovered from an account owned by cell member Momin Khawaja, police discovered he had written, 'picture this, a young bro wearing a suicide vest walks into a busy Israeli nightclub,

he presses a button and detonates, killing himself and dozens around him'.⁷⁵ Furthermore, in a discussion between fundamentalist terrorist Omar Khyam and FBI informant Junaid Babar, police allege that Khyam spoke in positive terms about a recent suicide bombing at a restaurant in Israel.⁷⁶ Secondly, in his 2006 martyrdom video, British suicide bomber Umar Islam who planned to detonate explosives aboard a transatlantic flight outlined his motivation. He states clearly, the attack is 'revenge for the actions of the US in the Muslim lands and their accomplices such as the British and the Jews'.⁷⁷ On a laptop recovered by Police and linked to Umar Islam, audio files included the song *Fahij Ahum*. Translated, the lyrics include 'Blow them up, blow them up wherever they are and slaughter them. Expel them from all the hillocks of Mazra [Arab town in Northern Israel] and defeat them.... They are the kin of pigs and monkeys'.⁷⁸

Leader of the 2006 airlines plot, Abdullah Ahmed Ali engaged in the fundamentalist movement while studying at City University London 1999 to 2002.⁷⁹ As a friend of extremist preacher and prominent fundamentalist Abu Izzadeen, Ahmed Ali adopted narratives promoted within the movement for many years before events leading up to his arrest and conviction. Thirdly, long-term fundamentalist Dhiren Barot who maintained connections to Al-Qaeda, and his bodyguard Abdul Aziz Jalil were active members of fundamentalist group Al-Muhajiroon from the late 1990s. In early 2001 before 9/11, Barot undertook a reconnaissance mission to New York where he filmed and made detailed notes on a variety of Jewish targets.⁸⁰ Barot and his accomplices later received sentences of up to 30 years for planning a range of

⁷⁵ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007] p.17

⁷⁶ T. Secker, 'e-book collection of documents relating to a probable 7/7 linked double agent', undated, available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

⁷⁷ Court transcript: R v Ali (Abdulla Ahmed Ali et al) [2008] EWCA Crim. 3334 p.37

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.1260

⁷⁹ D. Harrison, 'Abdulla Ahmed Ali: A terrorist in the making at the age of 14', *The Telegraph Online*, 13th September 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/2910971/Abdulla-Ahmed-Ali-A-terrorist-in-the-making-at-the-age-of-14.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁸⁰ Staff Reporter, 'Prosecution case against al-Qaeda Briton', *BBC News Online*, 6th November 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6122270.stm>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

terrorist bombing campaigns in London.⁸¹ Fourthly, court transcripts reveal the men involved in a failed suicide bomb attack in London on 21st July 2007 (*Operation Vivace*), had listened to sermons delivered by Jamaican Sheikh Abdullah Al-Faisal.⁸² In particular, a videotape entitled “Religion is Sincerity”, Al-Faisal promotes hatred of Shia Muslims, Hindus, Russians, and most significantly the Jews. Alongside his friend and close associate Al-Masri, Al-Faisal served four years in prison, convicted of inciting racial hatred and soliciting the murder of Jews. According to a prosecution witness, the leader of *Vivace*, Muktar Ibrahim, agreed with the extremist views promoted by these two men and had been actively involved in the fundamentalist movement for many years before carrying out his suicide mission.⁸³

Religious hatred of Jews

Labelling of the Jews as “Pigs” and “Monkeys” is common within fundamentalist discourse. It is part of an overall narrative designed to dehumanize, delegitimize, and generally construct Jews as the worst enemies of Islam. In 2006, prosecutors convict Al-Masri of inciting racial hatred, in particular against the Jews. Evidence presented in court shows that he told a private audience, ‘God has decreed they will never leave Palestine rather they will be buried there’. Before sentencing Al-Masri to seven years in prison, Mr Justice Hughes tells the defendant he had ‘helped to create an atmosphere in which to kill has become regarded by some as not only a legitimate course but a moral and religious duty in pursuit of perceived justice’.⁸⁴ The statement from the Judge offers compelling evidence that Al-Masri helped create an environment where fundamentalists were encouraged to develop a mindset in which terrorism and suicide bombing became a legitimate means in which to retaliate against Israeli occupation. Writing in *Al-Jihad* magazine, Al-Masri repeats and further reinforces his anti-Semitic views. Throughout issues of the magazine, it is common to

⁸¹ Staff Reporter, ‘UK al-Qaeda cell members jailed’, *BBC News Online*, 15th June 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6755797.stm>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁸² Court transcript: R v Ibrahim et al (Muktar Ibrahim) [2007] EWCA Crim 2396, 1202, p. 1779

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.2309

⁸⁴ D. Campbell, ‘Preacher of hate' jailed in Britain’, *The Age Online*, 9th February 2006, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/preacher-of-hate-jailed-in-britain/2006/02/08/1139379570546.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

find at least one article discussing Israel and the humiliation of Palestinians by the Jews. Writers commonly use the Quran and Hadiths in order to provide justification for arguments that are entirely unfounded. For example, Al-Masri claims there is religious legitimacy for attacking Jews because the Prophet Mohammed said, “You (i.e Muslims) will fight against the Jews till some of them will hide behind stones. The stones will betray them saying, oh slave of Allah! There is a Jew hiding behind me; so kill him”.⁸⁵ A second Hadith quoted by the preacher states, ‘The hour will not come until you fight against the Jews’.⁸⁶

Ever since the fundamentalist movement first emerged in the UK around the mid-1990s, associates have pushed a political narrative that argues Jews represent the greatest threat to Islam. Consequently, all Muslims are encouraged to despise Jews and actively work towards wiping Israel off the face of the earth. In issue 10 of *Al-Jihad* magazine, Al-Masri tells readers that, ‘Jews have always killed Prophets, and religious teachers and leaders’.⁸⁷ He then states that Allah has commanded Muslims to ‘fight against them [Jews] so that Allah will punish them by your hands and disgrace them and give them victory over them’.⁸⁸ From an international relations perspective, fundamentalists blame Jews for the sanctions on Iraq that caused the deaths of millions of Muslim men, women and children. Al-Masri argues there were two types of people involved in the crusade against Saddam Hussain, Christians and Jews. Rhetorically he suggests that although the US and UK implemented sanctions and the no-fly zones, Jews directed their actions thereby making them even more culpable for the destruction of this once great nation. Although not discussed in the article, fundamentalists were fully aware of the 1981 Israeli air strike on Iraqi nuclear facilities - evidence that Israel has long feared a nuclear-armed Iraq posed a significant threat to its national security.

Reject negotiations with Israel

⁸⁵ A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 10’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj1.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Al-Masri ‘Issue 13’

Al-Masri discusses the Jews and their occupation of Palestine in a two-hour sermon given in 1997/98 to a private meeting of fundamentalists in Whitechapel, East London.⁸⁹ He begins by arguing the Jews have enslaved western leaders who in fact hate them more than the Muslims. Guilty of inciting racial hatred and violence, Al-Masri claims that ultimately, God will wipe the Jews and the state of Israel off the face of the earth. Recognising the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa mosque, the message to fundamentalists from Al-Masri is emotive and provocative, 'the tunnels that they [the Israelis] dug underneath the al-Aqsa mosque will be filled with their skulls and their bodies'.⁹⁰ In the years preceding the second intifada, fundamentalists strongly rejected the legitimacy of Yassar Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. Labelled a *dirty rat* by Al-Masri, Arafat attracted widespread international criticism for surrendering 87% of Palestinian land to the Israelis.

Showing openly his disgust for the Jews and the alleged traitor Arafat, Al-Masri suggests the terrorist turned political leader sacrificed former supporters in order to 'please the rotten Benjamin Netanyahu and the rest of his pig nation'.⁹¹ At a demonstration in May 2000 attended by members of the fundamentalist movement, one speaker is reported as having pointed to the Jewish community and said: 'your state is a blasphemy according to Jewish law so that makes you not only cowards, garbage, scum, thieves'.⁹² Finding great favour with the audience, he accuses Jews of being '.... the most gangrenous part of humanity that has always killed its own prophets, betrayed its own people...that is why in our religion you are described as pigs, swine's and apes'.⁹³ In the minds of fundamentalists, there can be absolutely no negotiations or peace treaty with the occupying Israeli state. Al-Masri states clearly in issue three of *Al-Jihad* that Muslims should never stop opposing the peace treaty because, 'it allows the dirty Israeli Dogs to plunder and loot Palestinian territory as

⁸⁹ Press Association Reporter, 'The preaching's of Abu Hamza', *Guardian Online*, 7th February 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/feb/07/terrorism.world>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Al-Masri 'Issue 10'

⁹² S. O'Neil, 'The Joy of Semtex', *Militant Islam Monitor*, 1st May 2004, <http://www.militantislammonitor.org/article/id/66>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁹³ *Ibid.*

they choose'.⁹⁴ Instead of peace, Al-Masri consistently promotes violence as the only practicable solution. He argues the Palestinians are not in need of politicians like Arafat but of great warriors such as *Salah-ud-Deen* to regain their honour, dignity and values.⁹⁵ According to Al-Masri, 'all Muslims should begin to have a physical reaction in order to stop the human injustice that is going on in Palestine and God willing (insh'allah) justice will be done to the unbelieving Israeli dogs.'⁹⁶

In October 2000, leader of Al-Muhajiroon, Anjem Choudary, co-signed a warning to all Jews in the UK. It stated unequivocally, 'If they [Jews] support Israel financially, verbally or physically they will become part of the [Middle East] conflict'.⁹⁷ Any Jew, who spoke openly in support of Israel, ran the risk of retaliation at the hands of fundamentalists. In a newsletter dated April 2002, Omar Bakri Mohammed claims the state of Israel is worse than Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa in terms of atrocities committed against minorities.⁹⁸ Clearly aligned with Al-Masri, Hamas, and the global *Islamic fundamentalist movement*, Bakri argues there can never be peace in Palestine until Muslims have eradicated the state of Israel. Widely cited by fundamentalists is the claim that Prophet Mohammed promised the annihilation of the Jewish state 1300 years ago. In a veiled warning to the British public, Bakri claims that the British and American stance towards Islam and Muslims means they should not be surprised if Muslims target them in retaliation for their acts of aggression.

Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas

Within fundamentalist discourse, there is absolutely no tolerance for the Jews or the state of Israel. By means of Jihad, Muslims will liberate the entire region of Palestine with the Jews allowed to remain only as slaves. Hostile to the Palestinian Authority

⁹⁴ A. Al-Masri, 'Issue 3', *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, <http://www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj03.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

⁹⁵ Al-Masri 'Issue 2'

⁹⁶ Al-Masri 'Issue 3'

⁹⁷ O. Mohammed, 'Fascist Jewish State will never see peace', *Al-Muhajiroon*, 2nd June 2002, No longer online but archive copy available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

controlled by Fatah, Al-Masri claims the political party have sold out, and therefore Muslims must instead support the Islamic fundamentalist group *Hamas*. Issue six of *Al-Jihad* contains an article celebrating the 1998 release of the group's spiritual leader, *Sheikh Ahmed Yassin* from house arrest in Gaza.⁹⁹ There is evidence to suggest Al-Masri and other fundamentalists developed a long-standing relationship with Hamas. In April 2003, two British Muslim men from Hounslow carried out a suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv, Israel. Three people died when Asif Muhammad Hanif, detonated his improvised explosive device at the entrance of *Mike's Bar*.¹⁰⁰ A second bomb, strapped to Derby-born Omar Khan Sharif failed to detonate and he briefly absconded before mysteriously washing up on a beach two days later.

Two weeks before leaving for Israel, Sharif had been on the streets of Derby distributing leaflets on behalf of Al-Muhajiroun¹⁰¹ and his wife Tahira Tabassum had written down the mobile phone number of Omar Bakri Mohammad at the end of notes she made on a lecture about suicide bombings.¹⁰² Both men are alleged to have strong connections to Finsbury Park Mosque and when Police raided the building in January 2003 (four months before the attack), they found a letter from Sharif to Al-Masri, inquiring about the proper conduct of jihad.¹⁰³ Articles written in *Al-Jihad* magazine demonstrate that Al-Masri strongly supported Hamas and encouraged followers to recognise them as the only legitimate Palestinian opposition to Israel. Consequently, it is unsurprising that of the various Palestinian militant groups, Sharif and Hanif carried out their suicide bombing on behalf of Hamas. At a refugee camp in Gaza, the two men were equipped with explosives devices, given a specific target, and provided with an opportunity to record martyrdom videos, released shortly after the attack.

⁹⁹ Al-Masri 'Issue 6'

¹⁰⁰ Prime Minister's Media Adviser, 'Details of April 30- 2003 Tel Aviv suicide bombing-3-Jun-2003', *Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 3rd June 2003, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/pressroom/2003/pages/details%20of%20april%2030-%202003%20tel%20aviv%20suicide%20bombing.aspx>, (accessed 28th October 2013)

¹⁰¹ Hope Not Hate 'The Al-Muhajiroun network'

¹⁰² S. O'Neil, 'Bomber's wife is linked to radicals', *The Times Online*, 29th April 2004, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,173-1091516,00.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

¹⁰³ S. O'Neil, *The Suicide Factory*, London, Harper Perennial, 2006, pp. 90-91

Combative Jihad is the duty of every able Muslim

Preachers strongly encourage fundamentalists to recognise that jihad offers the only legitimate solution to problems faced by Muslims in the world today. Primarily, Jihad is necessary in order to expel foreign occupiers and remove apostate dictators in the Middle East. The ultimate objective of every fundamentalist Muslim is to re-establish the Islamic Caliphate; consequently, preachers consistently eulogise the necessity of Jihad in order to achieve this. From a religious perspective, God commands every able Muslim to defend their property, wealth, land and Islamic faith using all means necessary. Scholar Giles Kepel referred to members of the fundamentalist movement who first united in the 1990s as *Salafist jihadists*.¹⁰⁴ Kepel believed that all fundamentalists focused their attention on waging jihad in order to re-establish the Islamic Caliphate. It is self-evident that not all fundamentalists who pursue jihad later go on to pursue terrorism. However, a minority clearly do. Therefore it is important to understand the concept from a social and religious perspective in order to develop counter terrorism strategy that can prevent young British Muslims from going down a path that may eventually lead them to volunteer for suicide bombing.

Preachers instruct Muslims who live in non-Muslim lands such as Europe and America to help fellow Muslims facing oppression in places such as Iraq and Palestine. Failure to do so makes their existence in non-Muslim Haram (unlawful). The constant reinforcement of the need to act militarily is part of a general narrative in which members of the fundamentalist movement are told they can only live in the west if they are engaged in Jihad or actively supporting it either by preaching or fundraising. In 2001, reports surfaced that three British Muslim men from Luton died in Afghanistan while fighting Jihad with the Taliban.¹⁰⁵ All three were alleged to have been active fundamentalists suggesting the constant rhetoric from preachers like Al-Masri and Bakri Mohammed, were successful in encouraging followers to fulfil the obligation of Jihad.

¹⁰⁴ G. Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, London, I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009

¹⁰⁵ B. Choudary, 'British Muslims fighting in Afghanistan', *BBC Radio 4 Online*, October 2001, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/reports/archive/politics/lutonmuslims.shtml>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

Early chapters of this dissertation argued that jihad and terrorism are not necessarily synonymous. Jihadists focus on defending co-religionists and establishing a Caliphate, terrorists are more concerned with revenge and the restoration of honour to the Muslim nation. There can be little dispute that in the Quran, God has commanded Muslims to defend themselves, property, family and religion. However, it takes a great deal of manipulation to extend this command to permit the deliberate killing of civilians. Islamic scholars involved in various fundamentalists groups have certainly tried. Members of the UK fundamentalist movement appear divided on the issue of terrorism against non-combatants. As noted earlier, when Abu Qatada learned the GIA were targeting innocent villagers, he immediately withdrew support. Furthermore, the killer of Soldier Lee Rigby deliberately chose not to kill members of the public who had gathered around him. In contrast, convicted of inciting followers to murder Jews, fundamentalist preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri presents no issue with respect to the legitimacy of terrorism. Disagreements between fundamentalists on whether it is permissible to kill civilians in Islam, has meant that only a minority have ultimately volunteered for terrorism. This final section of the chapter considers the narratives that arguably have been responsible for convincing that small minority. Returning to the issue of jihad, this section begins by considering the religious basis for the practice, arguing jihad is ordained by God and therefore necessary for all Muslims whether moderate or fundamentalist.

Religious basis for jihad

Fundamentalists promote the virtues and necessity of Jihad in two complimentary ways. Firstly, Muslims hear of the divine benefits bequeathed by Allah upon those who fight. For example, a Muslim who dies while engaged in Jihad will immediately go to Paradise and space will also be reserved for seventy members of his family. Conversely, every Muslim knows the penalties they face on the day of Judgement for not carrying out their obligation to undertake combative Jihad. Issue ten of *Al-Jihad* magazine published in 1999 contains a general question and answer section with editor Al-Masri.¹⁰⁶ One reader inquires as to whether or not Jihad is compulsory. Al-Masri replies 'it is, as long as he physically able to do so'.¹⁰⁷ Having established that

¹⁰⁶ Al-Masri 'Issue 10'

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Jihad is an obligation that falls on every Muslim, Al-Masri then adopts a salesman like approach telling readers ‘the need to act has become critical because the world is plagued by polytheism, without a general leader and most people are now worshipping their selfish desires instead of God.’¹⁰⁸ Jihad is the only legitimate solution offered to Muslims in order to fight the unbelievers until there is no more shirk (polytheism) and the Islamic religion is in totality for Allah.

Versus from the Quran and narrations from the Hadiths are used by Al-Masri to develop a narrative in which jihad is second only to worshipping Allah. Followers are encouraged to believe there exists nothing more rewarding for a Muslim than to die heroically on the battlefield while fighting to establish the deen of Allah. Life on earth is short and insignificant compared with the afterlife. Upon death and before they reach paradise, Muslims will face judgement from Allah. Those who ignore what He has commanded will certainly spend an eternity in hell fire. These rather unsubstantiated claims may seem entirely ludicrous to most people, however to fundamentalists who fear God’s judgement, the need to carry out his commands form the basis of all rational decision making.

Western policy makers should not underestimate the power of faith. British Muslims sacrificed their obligations as fathers, sons and brothers in order to carry out the July 7th London bombings. One line of theory suggests they did so on the belief they had been ordained by God to carry out the operation. At the very least, they believed they were doing God’s work and would be rewarded in the afterlife. Evidence for this comes from the martyrdom video of Mohammed Sidique Khan in which he states clearly, “I myself, I myself, I make dua (pray) to Allah... to raise me amongst those whom I love like the prophets, the messengers, the martyrs”.¹⁰⁹ Devout religiosity may help explain why men widow their wives and risk a lifetime in solitary confinement in order to pursue extremist terrorism. Given such a proposition, writers who suggest that religious belief is not at least partially the root cause of terrorism, entirely ignore the irrational behaviour of so many Muslims. The question is whether absent of faith, terrorists would act as rational actors. There are cases of individuals pursuing suicide bombing for purely secular reasons without any

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Staff Reporter, ‘London Bomber: Text in Full’, *BBC News Online*, 1st September 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm>, (accessed 18th September 2014)

expectations of an afterlife. Irrational behaviour that strikes against man's natural instinct does not appear to be limited to Muslim suicide bombers.

In general, believers must strive through Jihad to achieve two things. Firstly, to remove all those who worship more than one god and secondly, to establish Islam over the entire world. One might contrast this objective with the perceived objectives of the war on terrorism, in particular, the pursuit of establishing liberal democracy throughout the world and reducing Islam to nothing more than personal worship. Recognising that not all Muslims are able to wage Jihad, Al-Masri states if a Muslim cannot reach the battlefield, they must speak out against polytheism and if they cannot do this then they must at least hate it in their hearts. Without question, those engaged in the fundamentalist movement completely reject the worshiping of multiple Gods. This may explain why so many have pursued Jihad in Kashmir against India, a country in which Hinduism dominates the population. Speaking of the benefits of Jihad, the author claims that for those who participate, God immediately forgives all their sins and faults. Moreover, participants will not feel the agonies and distress of death; in fact, the pain of dying will be nothing more than a pinch.

The message disseminated to fundamentalists is that by participating in jihad, they can gain absolution for both themselves and their families. This is critically important for anyone who believes in the day of judgement and fears it more than orphaning their children or spending the rest of their lives in prison for acts of terrorism. Pushing this political narrative amongst fundamentalists, issue one of *Al-Jihad Magazine* published in 1998 contains an article, which relates an anecdote from the Hadith concerning jihad. In summary, a man asks the prophet Mohammed if there is a deed equal to jihad to which he replies, 'Can you, while the mujahid is in the battlefield, enter the mosque to perform prayers without cease and fast and never break your fast'.¹¹⁰ Clearly, an impossible task thereby implying there is absolutely nothing that any member of the fundamentalist movement can do that is equal or greater in merit than the pursuit of Jihad. In the same article, the author talks about those who fail to recognise this saying, 'he who died without having ever fought in the way of Allah nor did he express any desire for Jihad, he died with the semblance of hypocrisy'.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Al-Masri 'Issue 1'

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Defensive Jihad

In Issue 6 of *Al-Jihad*, Al-Masri makes it clear that Muslims must perform their Islamic duties, one of which is Jihad. 'They should do this even though others hate it and even it affects their personal interests. Consequently, any state or group, which attacks Muslims, should be stopped and removed by force if necessary'.¹¹² Al-Masri informs readers there is no price which is too big to pay for this action, even if it means giving up their lives because everything they do is to seek the pleasure of Allah. Evidence perhaps, that within the fundamentalist movement, members were being encouraged to die in pursuit of Jihad. The wider implication appears to be that fundamentalist preachers considered suicide bombing to be a perfectly legitimate act. When *Al-Jihad* appeared online in 1998, the UK and US were busy enforcing a no fly zone in Iraq. Widespread sanctions had crippled the country leading to the deaths of thousands of citizens through malnutrition and disease.

Writing at the time in *Al-Jihad* magazine, Al-Masri suggested that Muslims must make sacrifices in order to alleviate the situation in Iraq and remove the overwhelming humiliation of the Muslim Ummah. Speaking directly to his followers, Al-Masri tells them to stop wailing and get up so they can burn the unbeliever's hand. Reinforcing his article by reference to the Quran, he concludes by saying 'fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in Allah'. Although this article appears targeted at the people of Iraq, in fact, the aim of the message is to encourage a spirit de corps amongst members of the fundamentalist movement in the UK. Humiliation is a common narrative within the *Al-Jihad* magazine; readers are encouraged to reflect on how the oppressive west degrades the Muslim Ummah and how it falls upon them to respond in kind.

Issue seven of *Al-Jihad* magazine is far more emotive. The editor directly accuses the US of murdering women and children in Iraq and instructs readers to fight against this western reign of terror. Failure to do so will result in the west continuing to label Muslims as terrorists, dump them in prison and torture them relentlessly. Muslims must act upon what they know to be right; they must not sit and do nothing if they fear Allah's punishment. The sanctity of the Ummah and the wealth of Islamic lands are the responsibility of each individual Muslim according to their ability. Al-

¹¹² Al-Masri 'Issue 6'

Masri states that some can defend these things by their tongues, some by money and others by Jihad, even dying in the act if it is the will of Allah.

Support for the mujahedeen

For Muslims that are unable to pursue Jihad, Al-Masri discussed a secondary option considered just as important for the cause. In Issue 6 of *Al-Jihad* he writes, ‘He who provided equipment unto a mujahid in the way of Allah, and he fought, and he who remained behind to look after the family of a mujahid in the way of Allah, he also in fact fought in the way of Allah’.¹¹³ Al-Masri suggests that woman and the disabled, who provide material support to Jihadists on the front line, have acted as if they had themselves fought against the enemies of Islam. In 2014, media reports suggested British Muslim women were travelling to Syria in order to transit finance and offer themselves as wives to insurgents fighting the Assad regime. Preachers consistently refer to versus in the Quran that both legitimize Jihad and praise those providing material support to those fighting on the front line. Since the early 1990s, fundamentalists have been encouraged to supply funds and equipment to the Islamic jihadists in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Somalia, and Yemen. In 2009, jurors found three British-born Muslims guilty of supplying equipment to the Taliban who at the time were fighting British soldiers on the Pakistani-Afghani border.¹¹⁴

The need to support the mujahedeen and those Muslims suffering at the hands of the west is strongly emphasised in Issue 8 of *Al-Jihad*. Readers are encouraged to reflect on how they may go through each day and not remember those going hungry, who have no shelter and who are terrorised by the bombing campaigns conducted by western nations.¹¹⁵ Referring to the many hadiths on the subject of Jihad, the author makes it clear that the Prophet Mohammed was active in Jihad and that he spread Islam by way of the sword. Rhetorically he asks why Muslims today do not follow the commands of Allah and partake in Jihad to rescue those who suffer at the hands of western crusaders. Also writing in Issue 8 of *Al-Jihad* magazine, Al-Masri conveys a

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Staff Reporter, ‘British-born Muslims supplied equipment to al-Qaeda’, *The Telegraph Online*, 9th March 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/4962802/British-born-Muslims-supplied-equipment-to-al-Qaeda.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

¹¹⁵ Al-Masri ‘Issue 8’

request for support from the Taliban in Afghanistan. Formally, the Taliban stated, ‘we expect our Muslim Brothers to lend us a helping hand in making the Holy Jihad rewarding and fruitful in establishing justice over the world and we assure you that we are willing to lay down our lives to make every sacrifice’.¹¹⁶

In the years immediately preceding the 2003 fertilizer bomb plot the conspirators actively supplied both finance and equipment to Taliban commander Abdul Hadi Al-Iraqi. This state of affairs offers further evidence that Al-Masri was able to directly influence fundamentalists, inciting them to defy counter terrorism legislation in order to directly supply foreign mujahedeen. In a 2002 newsletter published by Al-Muhajiroon, editor Omar Bakri Mohammed also emphasises the need for fundamentalists to support the Taliban.¹¹⁷ He claims they are sincere mujahedeen fighting on behalf of Muslims worldwide and subsequently deserve support in the fight against aggression and oppression led by the US and UK. Omar Bakri concludes by saying that Jihad is the only way to liberate Muslim land, to protect the life of Muslims and to propagate Islam around the World (by the sword if necessary)

Legitimacy of terrorism and suicide bombing

The fifth and final tenet completing the fundamentalist political ideology consists of narratives designed to legitimise terrorism and suicide bombing. Contrary to public perception, British Muslims who have pursued acts of terrorism commonly acted only when given permission to do so from their ‘Emir’. It is important, therefore, to understand how terrorism is legitimized in fundamentalist discourse, in particular how the issue of suicide is overcome since it is theoretically forbidden in Islam as is the targeting of non-combatants. Largely an extension of the tenet that deals with the obligation of jihad, preachers developed narratives designed to build a bridge from the legitimacy of jihad to the questionability of terrorism against non-combatants. In this respect, it is considerably important to recognise that only a tiny minority of

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ O. Mohammed, ‘The Declaration of the Conference on a shout in the face of falsehood’, *Al-Muhajiroon*, 12th July 2002, No longer available online but archive copy available from lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

fundamentalists acknowledge and are willing to act upon the narratives that make up this tenet.

Overall, this aim of this section is to show how preachers within the fundamentalist movement sought to remove any stigma attached to the deliberate targeting of civilians, thereby enabling a new generation of terrorists to plot suicide-bombing campaigns across the UK. Whenever speaking in public, preacher Al-Masri told members of the fundamentalist movement that Islam forbid the deliberate targeting of civilians. In a sermon given outside Finsbury Park Mosque around 2003, he stated, ‘we cannot support those who are ignorant and try to vent themselves using easy targets which have nothing to do with the war’.¹¹⁸ According to the non-government organisation (NGO) Cage Prisoners, this shows that Al-Masri did not advocate violence against non-combatants. However, this section will demonstrate that preachers like Al-Masri have on several occasions crossed the line and at least privately instructed fellow Muslims that terrorism is both legitimate and necessary in order to defend the Muslim nation from western aggression.

Fundamentalist Sunni Muslims in the UK appear strongly orientated by their entrenched belief in the superiority of Islam. Notwithstanding decades of western suppression, these ideologues continue to believe in and perpetuate the dream of re-establishing a Caliphate. While most fundamentalists agree with the principle of Jihad as a means in which to fight the enemies of Islam and establish the Caliphate, only a small minority accept terrorism to be a legitimate or necessary military tactic. Amongst those willing to carry out suicide bombings on busy commuter trains, is the widespread belief that western modernity is in direct conflict with Islam. Self-defence including acts of terrorism are therefore not only legitimate but what Allah has commanded. Directly quoting the Quran, fundamentalists cite the following as justification for their actions:

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah

¹¹⁸ M. Begg, ‘Abu Hamza al-Masri: untold story of the man Britain loves to hate’, *Cage Prisoners*, 2nd October 2012, <http://www.cageprisoners.com/our-work/opinion-editorial/item/5056-abu-hamza-al-masri-untold-story-of-the-man-britain-loves-to-hate>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly.¹¹⁹

In this, seemingly Clausewitzian total war between Islam and the west, extreme fundamentalists consider all non-believers to be legitimate targets. British citizens elect white middle class politicians who send troops to Muslim lands and pay taxes that facilitate long-term occupation. Extreme Islamic fundamentalists in the UK use this justification as the basis in which to de-humanize fellow citizens against whom they have plotted terrorist violence in order to influence policy makers in Whitehall.

Martyrdom not suicide

Recognising that Islam forbids suicide (only Allah can decide when a Muslim dies); Al-Masri is at pains to convince young Muslims that martyrdom and suicide are not at all synonymous. Rejecting the label “suicide bombing”, he applauds the activity stating that ‘whoever undertakes such an operation is amongst the very best of the mujahedeen’. More generally, preachers argue that what appears to be a seemingly abhorrent tactic, traced to Iran and the war against Iraq, is to be encouraged amongst fundamentalists because it is the only effective means in which to fight back against powerful western nations.¹²⁰ In support of the efficiency of suicide bombing, Al-Masri points to the 1983 attack on the US Marine barracks in Beirut. A relatively unknown group calling themselves *Islamic Jihad*, claimed responsibility for the attack, which killed 241 US service personal, thus forcing the subsequent withdrawal of US troops from the region. In order to gain legitimacy for martyrdom operations, Al-Masri cites the Muslim cleric Al-Alzhar of Egypt when he argued that ‘in the case of Palestine, martyrdom operations are legitimate in Islam, this is acceptable and these people are the best Shaheed’.¹²¹ As far as Al-Masri is concerned, what is good for Palestine is good for all Muslims. Members of the fundamentalist movement are repeatedly instructed that not only is suicide bombing legitimate and effective, it is also the highest, most devout act any Muslim can possible undertake. In speech given

¹¹⁹ Quran (8:60)

¹²⁰ A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 14’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj4.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

by Al-Masri around 1998, he tells the audience that when they are killed in the cause of Allah, 'you are doing the right thing'.¹²² When asked whether suicide bombing is permissible, Hamza replies: 'It is not called suicide, it is called shahid (martyr) operation and yes it is absolutely permissible within Islam'.¹²³

Necessary conditions for targeting civilians

In a general question and answer session within issue five of *Al-Jihad* magazine Al-Masri responds to a question about whether or not it is permissible to kill civilians.¹²⁴ Although he begins with the same narrative expressed publically (that generally such action is forbidden), he goes on to argue it is permissible under certain conditions. Firstly, if the enemies of Islam use civilians as a shield, then the war must still go on. Secondly, if a civilian man or a woman acts as a utility for fighters against Islam i.e. giving advice, manufacturing weapons, spying or even managing vital sites used against Muslims, then fundamentalists may consider them legitimate targets. Extreme fundamentalist terrorists have used these two justifications given by Al-Masri as the basis in which to plan bombing campaigns against commuters on the London Underground. This is despite the potential that such acts might inadvertently result in the deaths of fellow Muslims. British citizens both believers and unbelievers pay tax and vote for politicians who ultimately send soldiers to Islamic lands to occupy and oppress Muslims. Consequently, they are as guilty and as responsible of waging war against Islam as the British soldiers fighting on the front line.

The leader of the July 7th London bombings demonstrated the connection between this narrative pushed by Al-Masri and his act of terrorism when he said in his martyrdom video, 'your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world, and your support of them makes you directly responsible'.¹²⁵ The justification given by Khan for targeting civilians came not from him or his fellow conspirators; rather he paraphrased it from the many

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Al-Masri 'Issue 5'

¹²⁵ Staff Reporter, 'London bomber: Text in full', *BBC News Online*, 1st September 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

narratives promoted by Al-Masri which sought to legitimize the act of terrorism and suicide bombing.

The events and aftermath of 9/11

Ten years after the US first put boots on the ground in Saudi Arabia, 19 Muslim men carried out the most lethal act of terrorism in history. The 2001 attack in New York is widely considered to have led Muslims all around the world to reflect on their faith. A great number of British Muslims turned their back on previously hedonistic lifestyles and sought redemption by joining the fundamentalist movement in the UK. In a 2002 newsletter, the editor blames the foreign policies of the US, UK, and their allies in Muslims countries for the events on 9/11.¹²⁶ Bakri Mohammed states this includes the sanctions against Iraq, the support of the pariah state of Israel, the presence of foreign fighters on Muslim soil and lastly western support for corrupt regimes in the Middle East. Speaking publically to the BBC, Bakri lambasted western nations stating, ‘what happened was a direct consequence of the evil foreign policy of the US. This is the compensation and payback for its own atrocities against the Muslim nation’.¹²⁷ In 2003, Al-Muhajiroon gained worldwide notoriety when they publicly advertised a conference entitled “The Magnificent 19”. At this event, fundamentalists sought to celebrate the second anniversary of 9/11. Speaker Anjem Choudary tells his audience, ‘those individuals are Muslims, they were carrying out their Islamic responsibility and duty, so in that respect they were magnificent’.¹²⁸

Almost a year after 9/11 on the 12th of July 2002, Al-Muhajiroon issued a second press release regarding the attacks on New York. The author is unequivocal in outlining the fundamentalist narrative, which argues the west is at war with Islam and

¹²⁶ O. Mohammed ‘The Declaration of the Conference on a shout in the face of falsehood’

¹²⁷ Memri, ‘Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad’, *Jewish Virtually Library*, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Bakri_Muhammad.htm, (accessed 28th October 2014)

¹²⁸ Staff Reporter, ‘Group hails 9/11 Magnificent 19’, *CNN News Online*, 10th September 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/09/10/sept.11.ukposter>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

is now on a crusade to further oppress Muslims worldwide. Referring to events that followed 9/11, Bakri argued,

The war launched after 11th of September 2001 against ‘terrorism’ is in fact a war against Islam and Muslims, initiated by the US and the UK, legitimised by the United Nations, supported by the corrupt leaders of Muslim countries and hidden behind the masks of freedom, democracy and so called human rights.¹²⁹

Showcasing the determination of the worldwide *Islamic fundamentalist movement*, the July 2002 press release retorts defiantly, ‘the persecution, torture, imprisonment, arrest or internment of innocent Muslims will never dampen the determination of the fundamentalist movement to liberate Muslim land from occupation and to establish the Islamic caliphate ruled according to Shariah’.¹³⁰ The author appears determined to use the events of 9/11 to construct camaraderie between Muslims in the UK and their brothers and sisters worldwide. In particular, he attempts to contrast the Muslim nation with NATO such that an attack on one Muslim represents an attack on all. Somewhat prophetic, towards the end of the following year, the US stood accused of committing war crimes in Iraq. Media outlets beamed pictures of human rights abuses at Abu Ghraib prison around the world thereby electrifying the very narratives that fundamentalists in the UK had been widely promoting since 2002. By the time the abuse story broke, members of the fundamentalist movement were already discussing how the US and Britain were guilty of abusing Muslims, now publically they had confirmation and an impetus to act. Degrading treatment of detainees by occupying forces in Iraq would almost certainly have led fundamentalists to feel vilified and pushed a minority to question how they should respond. Ultimately, a minority choose to pursue terrorism in order to exact revenge and regain a sense of honour amongst the Muslim nation.

To liberate Muslim lands

While the US negotiated in the Security Council to liberate Kuwait in 1991, Osama Bin Laden met with Saudi King Fahd. He advised the Royal family to reject

¹²⁹ O. Mohammed ‘The Declaration of the Conference on a shout in the face of falsehood’

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

assistance from non-Muslim countries and instead offered help from his Arab legion of mujahedeen stationed in Afghanistan. The Saudis spurned this offer, instead allowing the deployment of western forces on their territory.¹³¹ Almost two years after the first Gulf war officially ended and to the disgust of Islamic fundamentalists, US military personnel remained in the Arab Peninsula. To all Muslims, especially fundamentalists, the situation was untenable. Consequently, the latter pursued a campaign of violent terrorism designed to coerce the Americans to leave the region. Spearheading the operations, Osama Bin Laden with support from fellow Afghan veteran Mohammed Khan, carried out a series of terrorist attacks in Yemen designed to kill US Marines on route to Somalia.¹³² Although this new wave of terrorism first targeted soldiers, it quickly moved on to encapsulate civilians and government workers stationed in US embassies around the world. Unlike the politically oriented nationalists, these postmodern terrorists found motivation within religious doctrine. The Quran told them what to do while the Hadiths offered guidance on how to do it. In the UK, leader of Al-Muhajiroon, Omar Bakri Mohammed, claimed to speak on behalf of Bin Laden whom he praised and encouraged fundamentalists to follow suit.

In self defence of the Muslim nation

British Muslim fundamentalist Abu Abdullah gave an interview to CNN journalist Dan Rathers in 2009. He stated that if Muslims wished to take up arms against the west then it was their Islamic right to do so. Abdullah argued that while Islam is a peaceful religion, at the same time it maintains the right to self-defence. Mindful of events in Iraq and Afghanistan, he told Rathers, 'If a Muslim is killed by the west then we [British fundamentalist Muslims] have the right to retaliate'. This statement by Abdullah echoes more recently in the case of Michael Adebajo. In the immediate aftermath of the slaughter of soldier Lee Rigby, he told an observer that this was 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'.¹³³ Given the relatively small and closed network of

¹³¹ J. Douglas, 'A Nation Challenged: Holy war lured Saudis as rulers looked Away', *The New York Times*, 27th December 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/27/world/a-nation-challenged-saudi-arabia-holy-war-lured-saudis-as-rulers-looked-away.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

¹³² R. Wright, *Sacred Rage*, London, Touchstone, 1985

¹³³ Bond 'Video: Gruesome footage showed a blood-stained Michael Adebajo shortly after butchering Lee Rigby'

fundamentalists in the UK, it is likely that Adebajajo and Abdullah were acquaintances and equally familiar with the political narratives that have influenced their thinking. Although Abdullah does not explicitly state the Islamic right to retaliate extends to targeting civilians, he does say that it is *mainly* against the army, thereby leaving scope for acts against non-combatants.

At one of the regular sermons given by Al-Masri during Friday prayers at Finsbury Park Mosque, he discussed suicide bombing in Chechnya.¹³⁴ The talk titled, 'she died a mujaahida Killing 27 Russian soldiers', concerned two young girls who had recently volunteered to carry out a suicide bombing. Twenty two year old Khava Barayeva and sixteen year old Luiza Magomadova drove a truck laden with explosives into a Russian special forces building killing themselves and at least two government soldiers.¹³⁵ Al-Masri claims that Allah had decreed the girls carry out the martyrdom operation and he celebrates how they ripped apart the enemies of Islam.¹³⁶ In conclusion, he asks Allah to accept the sacrifice and grant them and their family the company of Muhammad the Messenger of Allah (SAW). Importantly, Al-Masri reminds the audience of British fundamentalist Muslims that by carrying out a suicide mission, the girls have secured a place in paradise with God, not only for themselves, but also for their families. The views expressed in this private sermon are consistent with those communicated by Al-Masri in 1998 through *Al-Jihad* magazine. Contradictions appear between the public and private views given by Al-Masri. In particular, speeches given outside Finsbury Park Mosque in 2000 do not reflect the political narratives that Al-Masri propagated amongst fundamentalists in London before his arrest and incarceration.

Permissible domestically

In 2004, reporters obtained copies of private sermons given by Al-Masri between 2000 and 2002. In various recordings, the cleric encourages British fundamentalists to carry out suicide bombings by telling them, 'Our immediate duty is to correct our

¹³⁴ Staff Reporter, 'Suicide bombers strike in Chechnya', *BBC News Online*, 8th June 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/782079.stm>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Al-Masri 'Issue 14'

homeland. You do not have to travel thousands of miles to become a shaheed (suicide bomber) - you can be shaheed right on your own doorstep. This is the best jihad'. Author Neil Doyle who originally obtained the tapes, claim they show evidence that Al-Masri supported terrorism in the UK. An alternative interpretation argues that Al-Masri would not have considered Britain to be his "homeland" and therefore his audience were Egyptian dissidents rather than British fundamentalists. Therefore, any incitement to terrorism was more likely directed towards persons in either Egypt or Yemen, or Afghanistan. Whether or not Al-Masri is talking to Muslims in the UK or overseas, his message at the time was clear, fundamentalists should do whatever they can, where they can in order to liberate Egypt from the tyranny of President Mubarak.

Longstanding fundamentalist and protégé of Omar Bakri Mohammed, Abu Izzadeen, described the London bombers as 'completely praise worthy'.¹³⁷ In sermons delivered privately to fellow members of the fundamentalist movement, Izzadeen argued the British and Americans only understand the language of blood. Therefore, any Muslim that assists them is guilty of apostasy, the penalty of which is death. Simon Keeler, a close associate of Izzadeen told an audience at Regents Park Mosque in 2004: 'give your money to Osama Bin Laden and the mujahedeen. Go there [Afghanistan] physically and fight. Come fight the jihad. Islam will dominate the world, inevitable.' He went on to call September 11 2001 a 'great day' and praised the suicide bombers as 'the Magnificent 19'. All speakers at the mosque during this event were members of, or associated with Al-Muhajiroon and the overall UK fundamentalist movement. Police later charged Izzadeen and Keeler with inciting terrorism during this event and both eventually spent four years in prison.

As the fundamentalist movement gathered momentum, terrorism in the UK conducted by British Muslims became inevitable. In March 2004, Police arrested five British fundamentalists on suspicion of conspiracy to carry out a bombing campaign across London. Members of the *Crevice* cell actively participated in activities associated with the fundamentalist movement. In particular, like many of their fellow British Muslim terrorists, they pursued Jihad and supported the Taliban by sending money and equipment on a regular basis. Preachers like Al-Masri and Omar Bakri

¹³⁷ D. Gardham, 'Muslim preacher Abu Izzadeen guilty of inciting terrorism', *Telegraph Online*, 17th April 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1895959/Muslim-preacher-Abu-Izzadeen-guilty-of-inciting-terrorism.html>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

were careful not to directly instruct followers to pursue terrorism in the UK. However, by promoting extreme political narratives to impressionably young Muslims, they laid the foundations that were necessary to encourage a process of self-discovery. Muslims who encountered the fundamentalist movement developed an extreme mindset over western aggression against Islam. Consequently, they merely required some brutal act by western occupiers to tip them over the edge. Publicity surrounding events in Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo bay, water boarding and CIA black sites served this purpose, brutality against co-religionists all fed into the paranoia of British fundamentalist Muslims, convincing them of the need to strike back against the enemies of Islam.

Chapter Four - Activities carried out by Islamic Fundamentalists

This dissertation began by introducing several important concepts in particular “Islamic fundamentalism”. Critically, chapter 1 concluded by arguing that since the mid-1990s, British fundamentalist Muslims had organised themselves into a socio-political movement utilising religion as the basis for mobilisation. Chapter 2 examined how this de-facto *Islamic fundamentalist movement* emerged and became prevalent in Muslim communities across the UK. Notably, the second chapter identified how certain key events towards the end of the century, ensured the ideologues of Islamic fundamentalism, and enjoyed a highly receptive audience in the Muslim communities of London, Luton, Birmingham and Leeds. The previous chapter exhaustively detailed the fundamentalist political ideology from analysis of an archive of literature published towards the end of the 1990s. Influenced by the narratives that constitute this political ideology, fundamentalists based in the UK participated in a variety of activities in furtherance of their strategic goals, primarily to re-establish an Islamic Caliphate governed according to Sharia. Chapter 4 now presents an in-depth examination of the five most important activities carried out by fundamentalist Muslims in the UK. Participation in recruitment, preaching, facilitation, jihad, and logistical support, help immerse British Muslims in the politics associated with the fundamentalist movement. For a minority, this process develops in them the mindset necessary to pursue terrorism.

Ideologies, concepts, associations and affiliations require a continuous flow of new supporters, especially when they promote armed conflict as a core activity. Recruitment to the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* is both organic and targeted. Observing publicity surrounding fundamentalists groups such as al-muhajiroun and Islam4UK, predominantly young British Muslims attend public events and often willingly submit to “radicalisation” by preachers like Anjem Choudary and Omar Bakri Mohammed. In contrast with the organic pathway, targeted recruitment occurs when existing members deliberately use a variety of social networks to identify often-vulnerable Muslims whom they engage with and encourage in the adoption of fundamentalist Islam. For example, at the mosque, sports club or community centre, recruiters identify Muslims showing a devout appreciation of Islam. Privately, the recruiter will then approach the individual, inviting them to attend a religious-political

meeting, typically held in a domestic home. At this location, experienced members of the fundamentalist movement will discuss the war that is raging between Islam and the west and how it falls upon all Muslims to volunteer for jihad in order to fight back.

Following the discussion on how the movement recruits Muslims, the second section of this chapter examines political indoctrination of new members through the art of preaching. Charismatic individuals continuously promote the movement's core political ideology through a complex set of well-argued narratives. Referred to as 'radicalisation', this activity does not begin in basement of a mosque or front room of a fundamentalist preacher. The necessarily precursors are innocently laid by moderate preachers through sermons and lectures discussing the plight of co-religionists around the world. Debates concerning war and occupation in the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Chechnya raise awareness amongst moderate Muslims and encourage them to appreciate how they are not alone in the world. Moderate Imams at the mosque will suggest prayer and donations to reputable charities helping to alleviate the suffering. However, thoroughly primed with a belief that Islam is under threat, British Muslims become far more receptive to political narratives promoted by the fundamentalist movement.

Highly charged with a strong sense of idealism about how the world should be, British Muslims will commonly express an interest in pursuing jihad. The third section of this chapter therefore concerns the process of facilitation. Specifically, the practice in which experienced fundamentalists support fellow Muslims by helping them to gain access to training camps overseas. An important activity, facilitation can range from a basic introduction to full-scale sponsorship of a potential jihadist. Those who facilitate jihad may simply provide a piece of paper, one that vouches for the bearer and gives them entry to an overseas training camp. At the other end of the spectrum, more dedicated facilitators with greater connections may offer the complete package whereby a recruit is both financed and given an itinerary to follow after arriving in Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen etc.

Following on from the examination of facilitation, the fourth section of this chapter presents a detailed account of what it means to actually pursue jihad. Holy war fought against the enemies of God is an obligation taken seriously by all able fundamentalist Muslims, an activity universally recognised as the most rewarding of

all earthly deeds. It is believed by many that there is no more glorious a death than to fall on the battlefield. This is certainly true of the hundreds of British Muslims that have travelled to Syria since 2010 to participate in the overthrow of President Assad in order to help establish the Caliphate. It is important to understand jihad as an act separate to terrorism – the distinction is clear in the minds of those who pursue it. However, not all members of the fundamentalist movement are physically able to participate in jihad. Harsh living conditions common to the mountainous, tribal regions of Afghanistan compounded by the constant threat of western counter insurgency initiatives make this activity particularly challenging. Those willing to brave this environment and wage war against coalition forces, often require support in terms of finance and equipment. The final section of the chapter therefore looks at the important activity of fundraising and sending equipment to those in pursuit of jihad.

Financing of foreign jihadists became far more high profile in 2014 when Police arrested two young British Muslim girls attempting to smuggle thousands of pounds to fighters in Syria.¹ Extreme fundamentalists that have pursued terrorism in the UK over the last ten years, previously sent finance and equipment to the Taliban on a regular basis. This facilitation network enabled the men to later gain the training needed to construct improvised explosive devices. Consequently, after the 2005 London bombings, the British government made it a priority to clamp down heavily on those who financed foreign insurgencies. Success has been limited and today, funds raised in the Muslim community continue to enable the purchase of arms and logistical equipment used by mujahedeen all around the world.

This chapter continues now by examining the five most common activities carried out by members of the Islamic fundamentalist movement in the UK. In the absence of these activities, fewer British Muslims would be encouraged to adopt an extremist political ideology. Therefore, if policy makers can better understand the process by which British Muslims begin down a pathway that may eventually lead them to the front line in Afghanistan and more recently Syria, they have a much stronger chance of preventing future generations from following suit. The first activity

¹ M. Prynee, 'Student tried to smuggle £16,500 in her underwear to Syrian fighters, court hears', *The Telegraph Online*, 24th January 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/10593999/Student-tried-to-smuggle-16500-in-her-underwear-to-Syrian-fighters-court-hears.html>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

now considered is recruitment of moderate Muslims to the fundamentalist movement by existing members.

Recruitment

Drawing fellow Muslims into the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* is an activity carried out by all existing members in a variety of different ways. It may be as simple as inviting a friend to a public demonstration or as complex as a long-term strategic initiative to radicalise an entire generation of school children. Establishing the Islamic Caliphate is a long-term project and therefore it is not entirely surprising to discover an alleged plot by fundamentalists to take over faith schools in Birmingham.² In planting the seeds of segregation, gender inequality and the flaws of democracy, fundamentalists expect that when young Muslims reach a certain age and begin to look for an explanation of how the world works, the first place they will turn to is their religion.³ Many British Muslims, who have later gone on to become active in the fundamentalist movement, begin by reading material published on the Internet by so-called extremist preachers. Upon learning of the great battles fought by jihadists against invaders and occupying forces, young Muslims have sought out groups in the UK in the hope of joining the struggle. Sajjit Badat is powerful case study in this respect. Before volunteering to become a suicide bomber, he engaged with fundamentalist groups in London for several years. Prosecutors allege that members of these groups facilitated Badat's trip to Pakistan where he ultimately fell under the control of Al-Qaeda operatives.

Discussing the process of self-radicalisation, former home secretary David Blunkett suggests it may occur because of difficulties in an individual's life and their perception about what is happening to co-religionists around the world.⁴ When a British Muslim sets his mind on following the fundamentalist path, he will then seek out likeminded individuals either at school, the mosque, sports club, or community centre. Going down this route either alone or with friends will eventually lead him to attend events hosted by members of the fundamentalist movement. Gradual

² P. Burns, 'Trojan Horse: What have we learnt?', *BBC News Online*, 11th June 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-27779524>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

³ Author interview with Raff Pantucci, London, 20th August 2013

⁴ Blunkett *Author interview* with David Blunkett, London, 9th October 2013

socialisation will follow whereby existing members involve potential new recruits in activities designed to draw them deeper into the organisation. Public demonstrations, private study groups and invitation only weekends away to the countryside provide sufficient opportunities for experienced preachers to indoctrinate new recruits on the fundamentalist political ideology.

The *Islamic fundamentalist movement* draws in individuals during periods of their life when they are most vulnerable. Many have previously been involved in gangs, drugs, or other criminal behaviour. They present lifestyles that have proved difficult to escape from by other means such as education, employment or a loving relationship. Preachers tell potential recruits there is a war going on between Islam and the west; an existential conflict between good and evil that waged by the mujahedeen for generations. In order to atone for past mistakes and earn a place in paradise, Muslims must turn their back on society and become part of the fundamentalist movement. Isolation plays an important role in this respect. Preachers tell those who express an interest in fundamentalism that society does not care about them. They are not loved, respected, or genuinely considered 'British' by racists who call them 'Pakis' and terrorists just because of their skin colour and heritage. In contrast, the fundamentalist movement offers fellowship, a welcoming community, which provides salvation and divine rewards to all those participate. New members find themselves drawn into an identity crisis between the dual roles of being Muslim and British. Preachers encourage them to choose fundamentalism above friends, family all other social commitments. Gradual conditioning leads new recruits into believing their adoptive community is struggling against a western onslaught that is killing and oppressing Muslims all over the world. As fundamentalists, they are encouraged to participate in various activities that will collectively support the global fight back and potentially lead to the re-establishment of a Caliphate.

For the rebellious young Muslim, fundamentalism offers an escape mechanism from parental control. This controversial sub culture provides an alternative lifestyle to the stereotypical, arranged marriage, family oriented way of life typically pressed upon second and third generation British-Asians. Former head of Counter Terrorism Command (CTC) Stuart Osborne compares the initial attraction of young Muslims to the fundamentalist movement with certain genres of pop or rock music.⁵ He suggests

⁵ Osborne *Author interview* with Stuart Osborne, London, 10th September 2013

parallels can be drawn firstly in terms of why new recruits initially go along to meetings, and secondly the role of group dynamics in drawing individuals deeper into the movement, often to the point where they lose all notion of personal identity. Although religion appears to be the initial instrument of attraction, Osborne points to the charismatic nature of preachers and their anti-establishment messages that hook followers and keep them engaged.⁶ One might draw comparisons here with artists like Marilyn Manson and the kind of heavy punk rock gothic movement that continues to attract generations of angry young teenagers unsure of their place in society. In terms of the specific message going out to new members, Stuart Osborne has said:

It was sort of anti-establishmentarians in terms of this is what we need to do, we need to rise up, we need to be different, and we need to be somewhat aggressive in terms of the activity. Now there were lots of people who would have gone to those meetings and would never have been aggressive in their entire lives but actually liked to be part of that different culture.⁷

British Muslims who turn to the fundamentalist movement may do so in order to find a sense of unity and importance. Unlike parents, racists, school bullies and religious leaders, the fundamentalist movement treats them as a valuable resource, soldiers in an existential war against the west. An offer of respect, adulation and an invitation to become a hero present compelling reasons for young Muslims to engage with the fundamentalist movement. Three Birmingham men convicted in 2013 of plotting to repeat 7/7 were arguably social outcasts. Overweight, partially sighted and with few friends, Irfan Nasser, Irfan Khalid and Ashik Ali had sought respect within their community. To achieve this, they openly promoted themselves as dedicated fundamentalists with direct connections to Al-Qaeda.

Recognising the limitations of Islamic doctrine in retaining members, the fundamentalist movement promotes itself a lifestyle. Members pray, work and often socialise together, isolated from non-members who do not understand their way of life. By insulating themselves from the rest of the community, fundamentalists are more willing to accept radical suggestions like pursuing jihad than they would if they were on the outside looking in. While preachers are responsible for political

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

education, social interaction causes an intensification of the experience and deeper commitment to the cause. Consequently, members of the fundamentalist movement will commonly organise events like adventure weekends and paintballing in order to achieve a sense of fellowship. When new members progress into the inner sanctum, that is to say attendance at private team building events, they may be encouraged to travel overseas to countries like Yemen or Pakistan. In these far away often-lawless lands, recruits can undertake armed military training in preparation for jihad. Based on previous examples, preachers within the fundamentalist movement appear reckless and negligent about the possibility such activity may eventually lead members to commit acts of terrorism either in the UK or overseas.

Recruitment to the fundamentalist movement is both a bottom up and top down process. While British Muslims are known to have actively sought out charismatic leaders like Abu Hamza Al-Masri within fringe groups such as Al-Muhajiroon, at the same time, senior members have travelled around the UK, preaching about fundamentalism at mosques, book shops, gyms and community centres. Birmingham based counter radicalisation worker Jahan Mahmood has described how in 2011, Anjem Choudary and Abu Izzadeen came to the city in order to recruit new members.⁸ These two men believed that Muslims would empathise more with their fundamentalist political ideology following the controversy surrounding the ill-fated *Project Champion*.⁹ Mahmood has said of the attempted recruitment campaign:

He thought this is a great time now, Muslims are upset with the authorities, this was a good time to recruit them. His perspective, and his way of radicalising people was very dangerous. He was very impressive in the way he operated and convinced people. My friend that went with me, he is very impressive in some of the stuff he is using. I can see why these guys are just so compelling.¹⁰

⁸ Author interview with Jahan Mahmood, Birmingham, 16th August 2013

⁹ Staff Reporter, 'Birmingham Project Champion 'spy' cameras being removed', *BBC News Online*, 9th May 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-13331161>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

¹⁰ Mahmood *Author Interview*

Top down recruitment has and continues to take place at a variety of places both public and private. Evidence from previous studies suggests that recruitment to the fundamentalist movement has occurred in mosques, private homes, community centres, sports facilities and university campus. In the latter case, so great has the concern been over Muslim students adopting fundamentalist views and engaging in terrorist activities, that since 2005, university administrators have increasingly regulated visiting speakers, especially those attending events organised by Islamic societies. What follows now is a more detailed review of the locations where recruitment has previously taken place since the late 1990s. As a direct consequence of government intervention since 2005, traditional spaces such as the mosque and university campus have now declined in favour of private locations such as password protected Internet chat rooms and invite only lectures.

Mosques

Recruitment of Muslims to the fundamentalist movement occurred openly in mosques until at least 2005. Following the London bombings, government pressure led to an increase in accountability on the side of Imams. Private rooms and basements previously used to deliver sermons designed to encourage audiences to adopt a more fundamentalist ideology became contested spaces. Previously unregulated and unchallenged, fundamentalists commonly distributed leaflets outside of mosques following the end of Friday prayers. Worshippers showing an interest were then directed to private events held at less public venues including Islamic bookshops and domestic homes. The official government report into the July 7th 2005 terrorist attack highlights the role of mosques in the recruitment of fundamentalists noting, ‘from previous investigations the normal activities of a mosque can be entirely proper, but with extremists – unknown to the mosque hierarchy – operating on the margins’.¹¹ Furthermore, the report notes that after 2005, fundamentalists appear to have increasingly moved away from recruiting at Mosques, due to concerns about monitoring from the security services.¹² Implied in the report is that no blame can be

¹¹ HM Government, ‘Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005’, 11th May 2006, <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc0506/hc10/1087/1087.pdf>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

¹² *Ibid.*

attributed to the ordinary mosque hierarchy in respect of radicalisation. However, there is good reason to believe that far from being part of the solution, moderate Imams were actually part of the problem.

During the 1990s, former agent working on behalf of MI5, Omar Nasiri, infiltrated the UK fundamentalist movement in order to report on its activities. Recounting the means by which he carried out this activity, Nasiri explained that he would randomly attend Friday prayers looking for fundamentalist undertones within official sermons. If the Imam was apologetic of the west or failed to discuss the plight of Muslims engaged in jihad then he would move on to the next mosque. When it became clear that a Mosque had a strong fundamentalist presence, he would then befriend regular attendees looking for an invitation to private talks and discussions. The account given by Nasiri suggests potential fundamentalists gravitated to certain Mosques because they knew the Imam was sympathetic to their ideology and therefore they could expect to meet likeminded individuals. Between 1995 and 2005, Green Islamic Centre, Brixton, Baker Street and Finsbury Park Mosques served as important social hubs for members of the fundamentalist movement.

Today, while fundamentalists still congregate at mosques, there is no evidence to suggest they still use this kind of location for anything other than worship. Media reports indicate the majority of Imams now co-operated with local PREVENT officers in order to remove the threat of fundamentalism from their establishments. For example, in June 2014, Police arrested two men from Cardiff who travelled to Syria in order to pursue jihad. This investigation came directly from information passed to Police by the local Imam.¹³ Exceptions do still occur in terms of ad-hoc events. In 2013, Greenwich Islamic centre played host to a circuit presentation designed to draw attention to events in Syria. After the talk, the speaker invited individuals to join a humanitarian mission delivering aid to the country. Police allege fundamentalists used these aid convoys as means to transmit both finance and equipment to insurgents fighting on the front line against the Assad regime.

Private homes

¹³ A. Qureshi, 'Cage Interview: Muthana Brothers more questions than answers', *Cage Prisoners*, 25th June 2014, <http://www.cageuk.org/article/cage-interview-muthana-brothers-more-questions-answers>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

After July 2005, recruitment to the fundamentalist movement would no longer go unchallenged in the public and semi-private domain. Consequently, ideologues increasingly relied on closed spaces such as domestic homes and bookshops to radicalise fellow Muslims and convince them to join the struggle. The most notable case to shed light on closed-door radicalisation concerns Manchester based fundamentalist Munir Farooqi. Born in Pakistan but raised in the UK from the age of five, the veteran jihadist featured heavily in the fundamentalist movement from the mid 1990s. Inspired by the sacrifice of his fellow Muslims on 9/11, Farooqi travelled to Afghanistan in order to re-establish contact with Taliban fighters. Prosecutors allege the intention of his visit was to set up a network through which he would supply finance, equipment, and eventually volunteers for jihad. Investigated by police and the security services, Farooqi eventually stood trial for his activities and is now serving four life sentences.¹⁴

In contrast with other fundamentalists returning to the UK from fighting in Afghanistan, the security services failed to place Farooqi under any kind of control order restricting his movements. This meant he was free to carry out recruitment and raise finance on behalf of the Taleban for up to seven years before police finally arrested him in November 2007.¹⁵ Undercover officers who infiltrated his network discovered evidence of ‘radicalisation ceremonies’ taking place within the basement of his home in Manchester.¹⁶ Prosecutors alleged that over a period of several years, Farooqi had recruited young British Muslims to fight, kill and die in either Afghanistan or Pakistan by persuading them it was their Islamic duty to do so.¹⁷ Following a successful conviction, Police sought to confiscate the Farooqi family

¹⁴ J. Narain, ‘Jailed: Muslim extremists who used Manchester market stall as front to persuade men to head out to Afghanistan and kill British troops’, *Daily Mail Online*, 7th November 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2035578/Munir-Farooqi-trial-Muslim-extremist-jailed-using-market-stall-recruitment-centre.html#ixzz3IOAJ27CV>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

¹⁵ Staff Reporter, ‘Munir Farooqi given four life sentences for terror charges’, *BBC News Online*, 9th September 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-14851811>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

¹⁶ J. Narain, ‘Family of Al Qaeda terrorist set to be evicted from the home they own because he used it as a base to recruit jihadists’, *Daily Mail Online*, 7th November 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2058551/Al-Qaeda-terrorist-Munir-Farooqi-family-evicted-home.html#ixzz2t75Qxu24>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

¹⁷ Anonymous, ‘Case File: Munir Farooqi’, *Cage Prisoners*, Undated, <http://www.cageuk.org/case/munir-farooqi>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

home on the grounds it had served as a secret Al-Qaeda recruiting school. Appeal judges later rescinded the confiscation order allowing family members to remain in the property.

Private home based recruitment and radicalisation also feature heavily in the case of fundamentalist, Mohammed Hamid. In February 2008, jurors convicted the fifty-one year-old of soliciting murder and facilitating terrorism training to British Muslim jihadists. Police secretly recorded Hamid telling recruits about his connections to insurgents in Afghanistan, a network that allowed him to facilitate the pursuit of jihad against coalition forces. Hamid first became involved in the fundamentalist movement around 2004 in relation to the controversy surrounding Finsbury Park mosque and its outspoken Imam, self-proclaimed Sheikh Abu Hamza Al-Masri. Acting as mediator between trustees of the Mosque and members of the fundamentalist movement, Hamid helped negotiate an end to the standoff in which Al-Masri had sought to take control. Impressed by the religious and political ideology promoted by Al-Masri, Hamid quickly developed what became a long-term relationship with the movement, in particular Al-Masri's close associate, Atilla Ahmet.¹⁸

Serving as an important member of the fundamentalist movement, Hamid began inviting fellow members to his home in East London.¹⁹ Discussions centred on the political narratives, which collectively define the movements underlying ideology. In particular, Hamid constantly reminded members of their divine obligation to pursue and support jihad. Prosecutors argued that Hamid used these gatherings to radicalise impressionable young men, a process they claim had deeply intensified shortly after the July 2005 suicide bombings.²⁰ This proposition holds weight given that in addition to the failed 21st of July London bombers, the killer of soldier Lee Rigby, Michael

¹⁸ O. Bowcott, 'Profiles: Mohammed Hamid and his followers', *The Guardian Online*, 26th February 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/feb/26/uksecurity.july7>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

¹⁹ K. Sengupta, 'Jailed preacher, Mohammed Hamid, who trained 21/7 bombers 'linked' to Woolwich attack suspect, Michael Adebolajo', *The Independent Online*, 31st May 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/jailed-preacher-mohammed-hamid-who-trained-217-bombers-linked-to-woolwich-attack-suspect-michael-adebolajo-8638590.html>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

²⁰ D. Casciani, 'Top extremist recruiter is jailed', *BBC News Online*, 26th February 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7256859.stm>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

Adebelajo, also attended these meetings until they came to an abrupt end in 2009. Within weeks of Hamid's arrest, police stopped Adebelajo in Kenya on route to Somalia where he planned to join the proscribed Islamic insurgent group *Al-Shabaab*. Overwhelming evidence from an undercover police officer codenamed *Dawood* (who infiltrated the group and covertly recording Hamid at his home encouraging young Muslims to pursue jihad) resulted in a guilty verdict and subsequent life sentence.²¹

Children are at risk of being radicalised and encouraged into fundamentalism while still resident in the family home. In 2014, a mother asked a high judge to investigate their child's father accused of negatively influencing his two teenage sons by encouraging them to adopt 'radical fundamentalist thoughts that are associated with terrorism'.²² Barristers told court that their father, a Libyan national and Islamic fundamentalist, radicalised his children to the extent that both openly expressed a desire to pursue jihad as soon as they had reached sufficient age to do so. In the majority of cases, parents do not share such aspirations for their children.

Adventure weekends

Isolation and team building play an important role in the recruitment and radicalisation process. Taking a person away from their natural environment and bonding them with others, helps build a sense of camaraderie. A simple camping trip to the Lake District ensures a captive audience for preachers who use the opportunity to remind participants there is a war against Islam and a genuine need for them to volunteer for jihad. Preachers who deliver the fundamentalist political ideology intertwine the process with team building exercises. Running up hills with backpacks and doing bear crawls using sticks to imitate rifles may appear trivial, but the objective is to encourage fundamentalists to pursue actual military training in Pakistan. In August 2004, less than a year before their attack, members of the 21st July 2005 terrorist cell were photographed attending a 'terrorist training camp' organised by Mohammed Hamid.²³ These ad-hoc camps took place on at least six occasions

²¹ Bowcott 'Profiles: Mohammed Hamid and his followers'

²² Staff Reporter, 'Judge to probe 'jihadist' claims', *Belfast Telegraph Online*, 12th March 2014, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/uk/judge-to-probe-jihadist-claims-30086216.html>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

²³ Allegations that Hamid later acted as the cell's mentor were not proven beyond reasonable doubt. This despite evidence showing he had sent text messages to the

between 2004 and 2006 in various remote outdoor locations around the UK.²⁴ Over a period of several days, mostly unfit attendees with no previous military experience learned how to perform basic military manoeuvres. To make it as realistic as possible, the men carried mock rifles fashioned from wooden sticks. Considering the relatively amateurish nature of this training, the objective was to build camaraderie and allow Hamid to identify fundamentalists with the greatest potential to succeed as jihadists. The Afghan veteran had a reputation amongst the Afghan Taliban to consider, he could not recruit just anyone. Therefore, these training camps along with paintball sessions where followers could demonstrate newly acquired skills, served as an important and useful means of screening those who met the standard to pursue jihad.

Schools & University Campus

In May 2014, allegations emerged concerning an organised plot by the Islamic fundamentalists to ‘take over’ twelve Muslim faith schools in Birmingham.²⁵ This long-term strategy code-named *Operation Trojan Horse*, sought to oust moderate Muslims in favour of head teachers and school governors more amenable to Islamic values within the classroom. Leaked papers outlined a five-point guide to ensure schools ran according to strict fundamentalist principles. Defending this action, the unknown author states, ‘whilst sometimes the practices we use may not seem the correct way to do things you must remember this is a jihad and as such all means possible to win the war is acceptable’.²⁶ Going beyond the mere adoption of Islamic principles, Governors at one school in particular, Park View Academy organised for

conspirators shortly afterward the attack; Sengupta ‘Jailed preacher, Mohammed Hamid, who trained 21/7 bombers linked to Woolwich attack suspect, Michael Adebolajo’

²⁴ Casciani ‘Top extremist recruiter is jailed’

²⁵ L. Osbourne, ‘Muslim school headmistress reveals she was driven out of job by fanatics who saw her as the enemy, because she was too moderate’, *Daily Mail Online*, 9th March 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2576961/Birmingham-school-dubbed-Trojan-Horse-Islamist-radicals-holds-assemblies-promoting-notorious-Al-Qaeda-recruitment-agent.html>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

²⁶ L. Clark, ‘Revealed: Islamist plot dubbed ‘Trojan Horse’ to replace teachers in Birmingham schools with radicals’, *Daily Mail Online*, 7th March 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2575759/Revealed-Islamist-plot-dubbed-Trojan-Horse-string-schools-Birmingham-self-styled-jihad.html>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

pupils to attend a lecture given by Sheikh Abu Al-Suleiman. This notoriously fundamentalist preacher has previously called on God to destroy the enemies of Islam and for Muslims to prepare for jihad.²⁷ In addition, former staff at the school alleges that one senior teacher had repeatedly endorsed the extremist preacher Anwar Al-Awlaki. Security services link the now deceased Al-Qaeda operative to several major UK terrorism plots between 2003 and 2006. In response to allegations of a fundamentalist takeover, shadow education secretary Tristram Hunt publically warned against the threat from religious infiltration of UK schools.²⁸ Commenting on the revelations, former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, suggested the alleged plot was part of a wider global problem of 'extremism based on a warped and abusive view of a religion'.²⁹ Far more aggressive in his stance towards Islamic fundamentalism since leaving office, Blair has no longer sought to apologise for Islam by arguing that a minority have merely hijacked the religion.³⁰ Instead he now points to a wider support base for fundamentalism and an incubatory environment for future terrorism that includes the individuals responsible for trying to direct the education of British Muslim children.

Shortly after reports concerning *Operation Trojan Horse* first emerged, a witness came forward offering an insight to events at a second school targeted by fundamentalists. A former teaching assistant working at Satley Comprehensive in Birmingham until 2012 identified Zahool Iqbal as one of several male teachers and

²⁷ Osbourne 'Muslim school headmistress reveals she was driven out of job by fanatics who saw her as the enemy, because she was too moderate'

²⁸ R. Adams, 'Shadow education secretary warns against religious extremism in schools', *The Guardian Online*, 19th April 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/apr/19/religious-extremism-schools-tristram-hunt>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

²⁹ S. Milne, 'This war on 'Islamism' only fuels hatred and violence', *The Guardian Online*, 23rd April 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/23/war-islamism-hatred-violence-blair-cameron-toxic>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

³⁰ T. McTague, 'Blair: Trojan horse schools plot driven by same 'warped and abusive' extremism as Nigerian terrorists Boko Haram', *Daily Mail Online*, 15th June 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2658322/Blair-Trojan-horse-schools-plot-driven-warped-abusive-extemism-Nigerian-terrorists-Boko-Harem.html>, (accessed 7th November 2014)

governors known collectively as *The Brotherhood*.³¹ According to the witness, this extremist group sought to turn Satley into an Islamic School, ‘everyone was intimidated by the Brotherhood, they were the ones really running the school and part of this involved excluding moderates’.³² This case is particularly relevant to the recruitment of Muslims to the fundamentalist movement because Zahool Iqbal left the school in 2008 after his arrest and subsequent conviction for supplying finance and equipment to foreign mujahedeen fighters – a core activity of those who engage in the fundamentalist movement.³³ In the case of schools, evidence suggests that fundamentalists recognise the need to win the hearts and minds of young British Muslims. Controversially, they appear to have actively sought to do this through the education system. Rejecting any accusation of fabrication in the case of the leaked papers, former members of staff support allegations that a fundamentalist infiltration has been going on in Birmingham since the early 1990s.

Traditionally, University students have been a receptive audience for all kinds of radicalisation. Communism, socialism and even fascism have found a willing set of protagonists on campuses around the UK. Free from parental control, young inquisitive minds keenly embrace radical ideas and readily pursue new experiences. A significant number of British Muslims that have engaged in terrorism are educated to degree level. In several cases, the most intense period of radicalisation occurred during their time as students. As early as July 1998, Universities UK, which represents vice-chancellors, issued a pamphlet entitled ‘Extremism and intolerance on Campus’ designed to tackle on campus recruitment to the fundamentalist movement. The guidance contained within it, came in response to complaints from moderate Muslims who felt bullied by recruiters associated with Islamic fundamentalist group Hizb ut-Tahir.³ In written evidence submitted to a parliamentary committee

³¹ L. Eccles and L. Osborne, ‘Terror plotter employed at school targeted by radicals: Extremist was jailed for involvement in cell that planned to behead British soldier’, *Daily Mail Online*, 10th March 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2577906/Terror-plotter-Zahool-Iqbal-employed-Satley-School-Birmingham-targeted-radicals-Extremist-jailed-involvement-cell-planned-behead-British-soldier.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Staff Reporter, ‘Soldier kidnap plotter given life’, *BBC News Online*, 18th February 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7250697.stm>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

investigating the roots of radicalisation, The Henry Jackson Society, a UK based think tank stated in 2010:

A significant number of students and graduates from UK universities have committed acts of terrorism or have been convicted for terrorism related offences, in the UK and abroad. Our research shows that 30% of individuals involved in Islamist-related terrorism in the UK were educated to degree level or higher. Of these, 21 studied at a UK university; 16 were graduates; three were postgraduate students and one had achieved a postgraduate qualification.³⁴

In 2011, The UK Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills (BIS) confirmed that thirty-nine universities received extra funding to improve staff training due to fears that students were at risk from fundamentalism.³⁵ At the same time, Prime Minister David Cameron told Parliament that government needed to make sure it did more to 'de-radicalise our universities'.³⁶ Published in April 2011, a report carried out by the All-Party parliamentary group on homeland security, concluded that campus extremism was indeed a 'serious problem'.³⁷ In conclusion, the group expressed concerns that Muslim students were being recruited on campus by fundamentalists,

³⁴ Henry Jackson Society, Roots of violent radicalisation: Written evidence submitted by The Henry Jackson Society (RVR05) to the Home Affairs Select Committee, *UK Parliament*, 17th November 2011, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/writev/rootviol/rv05_2.htm, (accessed 11th November 2014)

³⁵ R. Brant, 'How widespread is campus extremism?', *BBC News Online*, 7th February 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12337531>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

³⁶ C. Hope, 'David Cameron: We will drain the swamp which allows Muslim extremists to flourish', News article about David Cameron tells Parliament the government needs to do more de-radicalise universities', *The Telegraph Online*, 3rd June 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10097006/David-Cameron-We-will-drain-the-swamp-which-allows-Muslim-extremists-to-flourish.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

³⁷ A. Harrison, 'Campus extremism 'a serious problem' say MPs and peers', *BBC News Online*, 28th April 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-13223026>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

adding that some academics did not cooperate with efforts to tackle the problem because ‘they did not wish to be seen to be spying’.³⁸

Shortly after the killing of soldier Lee Rigby, media reports emerged suggesting that Greenwich University Islamic Society played a definitive role in radicalising the two men responsible. Supporting this claim is the suggestion that in his late teens, Michael Adebolajo concluded that Islam could answer his questions and he reverted to Islam during the first year of his undergraduate degree in politics.³⁹ During his time as a student, Adebolajo shared in the anger of those around him who were protesting against the Iraq war. In light of this discovery, Home Secretary Theresa May criticised universities for complacency in tackling radicalisation. May announced the government would clamp down hard on Universities who failed in their duty of care to protect vulnerable students from recruiters associated with the fundamentalist movement.⁴⁰

As a politics student, Adebolajo was particularly sensitive to international affairs and the impact of British foreign policy on his fellow Muslims around the world. This may explain why he became involved in the fundamentalist movement and subsequently attended public demonstrations with various preachers including Anjem Choudary and Abu Izzadeen. In 2014, an article in the *Spectator* magazine suggested the government had still not adequately addressed the problem of fundamentalist recruitment on university campus.⁴¹ The suggestion is that student led Islamic societies continue to host preachers who promote a fundamentalist political ideology and who seek to recruit students. Examples given in support of this

³⁸ J. Grove, ‘Campus extremism tackled by new website’, *The Times Online*, 21st May 2013, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/campus-extremism-tackled-by-new-website/2003998.article>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

³⁹ D. Casciani, ‘Woolwich: How did Michael Adebolajo become a killer?’, *BBC News Online*, 19th December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25424290>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁴⁰ P. Wintour and S. Jones, ‘Theresa May’s measures to tackle radicalisation come under fire’, *The Guardian Online*, 27th May 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/may/27/theresa-may-woolwich-radicalisation>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁴¹ P. Tatchell, ‘Islamist extremists shouldn’t be allowed to preach hate at British universities’, *The Spectator Online*, 29th April 2014, <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2014/04/universities-must-not-host-hardline-islamist-extremists/>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

proposition include Westminster University who played host to Murtaza Khan in 2011 and Brunel University who invited Dr Khalid Eikry to be a guest speaker in 2012.

Prisons and young offender institutes

In 2014, a BBC documentary entitled 'From Jail to jihad' discussed the problem of Muslims being radicalised while detained in UK prisons.⁴² Responding to claims made in the programme, the head of the Prison and probation service accepted there is a small but 'significant risk' of Muslim prisoners becoming radicalised and subsequently joining the fundamentalist movement.⁴³ Shadow Minister for communities and local government Paul Goodman agreed that prisons are a cause of concern and noted the alleged link between prisons and 'terrorist indoctrination'. Discussing the subject in parliament, Goodman highlighted how the shoe bomber Richard Reid was partially radicalised while detained in Feltham Young offenders institute. Also radicalised behind bars, leader of the July 21st terrorist conspiracy Muktar Ibrahim joined the fundamentalist movement while serving a two-year prison sentence. In 2002, prison governors suspended two Islamic imams amid fears they were preaching a fundamentalist political ideology to inmates. From Jail to jihad, detailed extensive efforts by Prison authorities to combat radicalisation, which included special vetting of Imams and the literature made available to Muslim prisoners.⁴⁴

James Brandon at the Henry Jackson society spent a year investigating the problem of fundamentalist radicalisation and recruitment behind bars.⁴⁵ Using first hand accounts given by prisoners themselves, Brandon offers the following highly informative insight in respect of prison-based radicalisation:

⁴² T. Giles, 'From Jail to Jihad', [online video], *Panorama*, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0444flh>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁴³ R. Rowe, 'From jail to jihad? The threat of prison radicalisation', *BBC News Online*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-27357208>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ J. Brandon, 'British prisons: Incubators for Islamist extremism?', *Inside Time*, December 2009, http://www.insidetime.co.uk/articleview.asp?a=622&c=british_prisons_incubators_for_islamist_extremism, (accessed 11th November 2014)

Extremists, particularly in Category A prisons, deliberately aim to recruit individuals into their ideology through offering them support, protection and advice while at the same time filling their heads with an ever-more extreme ideology. Many of their recruits are ordinary Muslims doing time for minor crimes like fraud and robbery who want to do their sentence with the minimum amount of fuss. These people often turn to religion in prison to pass the time and because it helps them get through a difficult period in their lives. Instead, their new extremist friends, in the guise of helping them, gradually draw them into adopting an ideology that preaches hatred and intolerance for non-Muslims and towards Muslims who have different understandings of Islam.⁴⁶

From the work undertaken by Brandon, the evidence suggests prisoners who turn to religion to help pass the time are encouraged to adopt a fundamentalist religious and political ideology. Upon release, existing members welcome these new recruits going so far as to pick them up at the prison gate.⁴⁷ It appears that recruitment within detention facilities operates in two stages. Those already incarcerated draw in new volunteers, while those on the outside eventually take over, handling the more intense indoctrination occurring far away from any kind of police observation. Responding to the problem of radicalisation & recruitment behind bars, Brandon suggests the following response:

Make sure that known extremists are separated from the mainstream prison population... In the long run, the government will probably have to do what Egypt and other countries have already done – to create special centres to de-radicalise extremists through exposing them to moderate Islamic teachings and showing them the consequences of spreading hatred and intolerance.⁴⁸

Preaching

With new members drawn into the movement, the next step is to indoctrinate them towards adopting fundamentalist political ideology. In this respect, the importance of

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Giles 'From Jail to Jihad'

⁴⁸ Brandon 'British prisons: Incubators for Islamist extremism?'

friendship and group dynamics appears well established. Proponents of the social network and social movement theories contend that radicalisation is transmitted and intensified through social affiliations. As early as 2008, leading academic Marc Sageman argued that radicalisation of Muslim youth takes place through bonds of friendship, kinship, discipleship and other social networks.⁴⁹ In support of Sageman, writer Ed Hussain has claimed that preachers like the radical and eloquent Omar Bakri Mohammed, seduced British Muslims into fundamentalism through a series of fiery speeches delivered at various social events up and down the country. According to Hussain, Bakri held a masterful command of the Arabic language and was able to quote from the Quran without hesitation.⁵⁰ In a sample of 100 'militant-jihadists', Sageman found that only thirteen attributed their affiliation with 'jihad' solely to religious beliefs, thereby indicating that what draws people in, is not necessarily, what keeps them engaged. Friends trust friends, and when a person joins any kind of organisation or movement, they are keen to demonstrate their commitment to the cause. The easiest way in which they can do this is by expressing a deep interest in ideas promoted internally. This explains why Muslim converts are often the most devout, the most extreme in following religious doctrine because they want to be respected by existing members of their adopted faith.

The task of disseminating narratives constituting the political ideology of the fundamentalist movement falls to preachers of varying capability. Exclusively men aged over thirty; preachers either have experience of combative jihad or studying Islam in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Within certain discourse, preachers find themselves referred to as either *hardliners* or *extremists*; derogatory terms used to delegitimise their authority within the Muslim community. To fundamentalists, however, preachers like Anjam Choudary have earned sufficient legitimacy and respect to rule on a wide range of subjects ranging from Islamic divorce to violence against non-combatants. On a national scale, the promotion of the fundamentalist political ideology has taken place consistently and effectively since the mid-1990s. Extreme narratives designed to unite Muslims have pervaded mosques, schools and sports clubs and university campuses all around the UK. It is the fact that not all

⁴⁹ M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008

⁵⁰ E. Hussain, *The Islamist: Why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left*, London, Penguin, 2007, p.82

preaching falls into the domain of terrorism, extremism or radicalisation that explains why these ideas have been so successful transplanted into the Muslim community. Even so called “moderate preachers” disseminate beliefs that terrorists may use as a rallying cry to garner support and legitimacy for acts of violence.⁵¹ Just as there is a fine line between preaching anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, so too can we find a grey area between promoting ideas that encourage young British Muslims to be politically active, and more extreme ideas that may radicalise a minority towards pursuing terrorism against the west.

Preaching of the political ideology associated with the fundamentalist movement took hold in the UK around the mid-1990s. According to an official report into the 2005 London Bombings:

As Al Qaida developed in the 1990s, a number of extremists in the UK, both British and foreign nationals – many of the latter having fled from conflict elsewhere or repressive regimes – began to work in support of its agenda, in particular, radicalising and encouraging young men to support jihad overseas.⁵²

The most notorious preachers linked to this report include Abu Hamza Al-Masri, Abdullah al-Faisal, Abu Qatada and Omar Bakri Mohammed. Explaining the rising popularity of these men, former head of Counter Terrorism Command (CTC) Stuart Osborne, has said, ‘Their profile mainly came from the gravitas they held within minority sections of the local community’.⁵³ Resistance appears to have failed because police were powerless to remove fundamentalists despite calls from moderate Muslims for them to do so. In their defence, preachers claimed the right of free speech, freedom to celebrate, demonstrate and hold public meetings in defiance of the community view. Protection of Human Rights trumped fears about fundamentalism and the movement quickly gained traction amongst the Muslim community. Osborne also believes preachers gained popularity because, ‘followers became quite excited by this radicalisation, you know, this is against the establishment, this has a different

⁵¹ H. Al-Haddad, ‘Living Islam in the West’, [online video], 5th October 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyG73jJWSJk&list=PLIgUzcnbbNNUNKK4tdO8cavzsRorkglYp&index=12>, (accessed 11th November 2014),

⁵² HM Government, ‘Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005’

⁵³ Osborne *Author interview*

fervent to it'.⁵⁴ Fundamentalist Islam as a sub-culture quickly became fashionable; it arrived in the UK at a time when the fall of communism created an opportunity for new ideas and new movements around the world.

Although widely arguing that Muslims hold the right of self-defence, the majority of those who undertake the task of preaching do not specifically endorse terrorism. The majority of preachers recognise that targeting civilians runs contrary to the teachings of the prophet Mohammed. In contrast, jihad in defence of fellow Muslims commands a greater degree of legitimacy and therefore acceptance amongst fundamentalists. Throughout the 1990s, the British government largely tolerated Abu Qatada, Abu Hamza Al-Masri and Omar Bakri Mohammed.⁵⁵ Observers allege that in exchange for 'no blood on British soil', these men were gifted a safe haven from which to incite jihad overseas – in particular Algeria.⁵⁶ A change in the status quo and recognition of the role preacher's play in incubating terrorism appeared on the horizon in 2003. Judge Sir Michael Astil told six convicted terrorists, 'the spiral of contamination does not begin with you, it has its origins in the teachers and preachers of hatred and revenge who radicalise idealist and impressionable young minds'.⁵⁷ Following this damning indictment, national policy on countering radicalisation and terrorism appears to have changed. Consecutive home secretaries have gone to great lengths to deport outspoken preachers not holding British citizenship.⁵⁸

The complex hierarchy of preaching divides into three loosely distinct categories. Firstly, at the very broad level, individuals generally considered moderates, publically denounce western aggression against Muslims. This can occur in a regular mosque at Friday prayers and concern nothing more than raising awareness of genuine grievances. For example, Imams regularly raise the issue of the occupation of Palestine and more recently crimes against humanity in Syria.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ F. Foley, 'Reforming counterterrorism: Institutions and organizational routines in Britain and France', *Security Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2009, pp. 435-478

⁵⁶ F. Foley, *Counter Terrorism in Britain and France: Institutions, Norms and the Shadow of the Past*, London, Cambridge University Press, 2013

⁵⁷ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007] EWCA Crim 1612.

⁵⁸ Staff Reporter, 'Abu Qatada case has cost UK £1.7m, home secretary says', *BBC News Online*, 14th June 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22909465>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

Secondly, at a more focused level, preachers like Anjem Choudary build upon the messages given by moderates to encourage Muslims to adopt a more fundamentalist stance. They offer followers a generalised, agenda driven view of world events deliberately designed to encourage the adoption of extreme political narratives. For example, controversial acts carried out by the UK government that concern the Muslim nation fall into the narrative in which the west is engaged in an overall strategy to subjugate Islam and prevent the rise of an Islamic caliphate. Preachers in this category understand the law and make a concerted effort to sail close to the line but never cross it.

Consensus suggests that young British Muslims are radicalised by second level extremist preachers. Evidence indicates however, that individuals drawn to these men often already harbour thoughts of pursuing jihad and living as fundamentalists. They seek out likeminded individuals as part of a process of self-radicalisation driven partially by what they learn from moderate preachers at Friday prayers. Completing the hierarchy, the third level of preaching concerns various clandestine efforts to solicit murder and incite terrorism. Almost exclusively conducted in private, a minority of extreme preachers convince a minority of fellow fundamentalists that it is legitimate to terrorise the enemies of Islam along with those who collaborate or assist them in any way. Characters fitting this profile against whom the British government have either deported or imprisoned include Abu Hamza Al-Masri, Omar Bakri Mohammed, Abdul el-Faisal, Abu Izzadeen and his close friend Atilla Ahmet also known as Abu Abdullah.

Laying the foundations (broad radicalisation)

In a series of online lectures entitled “Living Islam in West”, London based preacher, Dr Haitham Al-Haddad, discusses the topic of jihad. Responding to various questions posed by Muslims, he is less instructive and more reflective. He encourages Muslims to consider the various standpoints on jihad without directly adopting any specific position himself. Asked what a Muslim should do if his country’s laws don’t allow citizens to pursue jihad, Al-Haddad states that Muslims must do what they believe in, but they will bear the legal consequences of their decision. Like other preachers in the moderate category, this respected cleric merely offers advice on what is legitimate in the context of Islam. He places the emphasis on individuals to make up their own mind about any action they should take. By raising awareness of the subject, Al-

Haddad is opening the door to towards fundamentalism albeit not necessarily pushing anybody through it. Illuminating problems faced by the Muslim nation is common by moderate Muslim preachers. In fairness they have a legitimate right to do so, however, without a strong counter narrative to the fundamentalist movement's political ideology, British Muslims will continue to follow a path that leads them to volunteer for jihad.

Adopting what appears from the outset to be a responsible moderate position, American Sheikh, Khalid Yasin, encourages young Muslims 'not to rush in to jihad'.⁵⁹ Concurrently however, he also praises the mujahedeen who he says are fighting for the sake of Allah. In the mind of Yasin and other moderate preachers, Muslims waging legitimate holy war are praiseworthy. Western governments should not therefore discredit these freedom fighters by conflating them with terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda. Reflecting on the Syrian civil conflict, Yasin states, 'it is not wrong for young Muslim men to have the feeling in their heart to make a legitimate jihad, where there is a legitimate theatre of jihad. It is not wrong per se for a brother to want to fight, but he should have a mentor, a leader, and an imam who approves this feeling'.⁶⁰ Yasin offers cautionary advice suggest that before any Muslim even considers the pursuit of jihad, he needs to take care of his immediate responsibilities including family and local community. 'Muslims cannot travel to another country to put out a fire while their own home is burning. If the brothers are sincere and want to go for jihad, they need to consult with a responsible Muslim Scholars in authority in their country, a wali ul-amr, so he can check the situation of the young man and give proper advice'.⁶¹

Preaching fundamentalism (narrow radicalisation)

Moderate preachers lay the foundations that fundamentalist preachers commonly build upon. They use a variety of different mediums to disseminate the message but recently the Internet has proved to be the most effective. Social media websites for

⁵⁹ K. Yasin, 'Jihad or Terrorism', [online video], 6th June 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NKBhgTDCMI>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ 'The Jihadist Movements of the 20th Century - Sh. Dr. Yasir Qadhi', [online video], Sep 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/user/IslamNetVideo?feature=watch>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

example, Facebook and YouTube, allow preachers to broadcast to a wider audience. Far more British Muslims now hear their messages than could previously have been reached through traditional avenues like the Mosque or community centre. One of the most popular YouTube channels for disseminating the fundamentalist political ideology is *SalafiMedia*. Sampling available videos, one can immediately recognise the political narratives audiences are encouraged to adopt. In *War on Islam*, Abu Izzadeen argues that without question, the so-called War on Terror is in reality a War against Islam. Speaker Abu Izzadeen decries how Muslim men, women and children are losing their lives by the thousands and all the while, the British public mourn the loss of one soldier in Woolwich.⁶²

Concomitant with videos published on YouTube, web pages maintained by fundamentalists on the popular social network website Facebook, consistently reinforce their political narratives. Posts made by Abu Abdullah Al-Britani in 2014, include:

There can never be justice under manmade law, and those who work for it are fools. Allah says 'the one who rules and judges by other than what Allah has revealed, such are the oppressors (February 19th 2014)

Many out there are in the fields of dawah and jihad but yet their intention is not to implement the shariah of Allah or working towards the khilafah but rather for a law and order which is manmade. (February 20th 2014)

May Allah protect all those who are in the lands of jihad defending the ummah of Islam, they are in jihad defending the innocent men, women and children, Protecting the weak, the orphans and the needy from the hands of the oppressive rulers. (Jan 2nd 2014)

The above three examples demonstrate how Al-Britani openly promoted narratives associated with fundamentalism, in particular the absence of Sharia and the obligation to pursue jihad.⁶³ In addition to western aggression against Islam, Al-Britani constantly highlights the plight of British Muslims arrested and held for various terrorism offences. These media channels and web pages effectively serve as

⁶² A. Izzadeen, 'Talk inside Regents Park Mosque', [online video], 24th April 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nU6OPcj5qT0>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁶³ The Social Media page of Abu Abdullallah Al-Britani has been removed. In May 2013 it was available at <https://www.facebook.com/1abuabdullahalbritani>

propaganda tools, allowing preachers to build a sense of camaraderie, inform fundamentalists about key events while at the same time preaching political narratives that attract moderate Muslims towards fundamentalism. In terms of reach, as of March 2014, Abu Abdulla Al-Britani broadcasts to almost two thousand followers.⁶⁴

In his broadcast entitled, *Can there be peace with Israel?* preacher Abu Muwahhid promotes several narratives associated with the fundamentalist political ideology.⁶⁵ In particular, that there can be no peace treaty with the Jews as long as they continue to occupy Palestine. Muslims must continue the intifada to liberate the land or they must die trying. Peace treaties with Israel are not valid. As long as the Jews occupy Palestine, it is the duty of all able Muslims to fight against them. Speaking at the *Islamic Awakening* conference in December 2010, fundamentalist preacher Abu Mounisa told his audience that Muslims must strive to replace the western system of democracy with Islam. Calling for revolution, he argued that all of society must bow down to Allah and be provoked in order to achieve this. Mounisa provocatively tells the audience ‘we need to behead democracy from its roots, we need to behead capitalism from its roots, take it, kill it from its roots, everyday we should attack their system just like the prophet Mohammed did’.⁶⁶

Appearing to incite the audience towards insurgency against the state, Mounisa argues that Muslims must seek to turn society around by removing the root of the problem, specifically by attacking the government that controls law and order. Although these fiery public speeches seek to delegitimize western methods of governance in favour of Islam and Shariah, the speakers rarely cross the line. Preachers involved in narrow radicalisation will seldom if ever, directly tell listeners to carry out acts of terrorism against the west. The purpose of this rhetoric is to recruit Muslims into the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. Once inside, they can if they

⁶⁴ Due the nature of the material published by fundamentalist preachers, it is common for their social media profiles to be removed and re-published using different accounts. It is therefore difficult to keep track of a single user in terms of their Internet presence.

⁶⁵ A. Abdullah, ‘Islam will dominate the world’, [online video], *Global Tawhid*, 4th January 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yykTNDdb1x0>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁶⁶ A. Mounisa, ‘The Islamic Awakening Conference’, [online video], *Global Tawhid*, 4th March 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YktM-4Vspg>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

wish, hear sermons from more extreme fundamentalists pushing narratives that are widely seen as inciting terrorism. In the next section, we consider examples of where this process has been uncovered either as consequence of investigative journalism or by a member of the audience innocently recording the activity and later publishing it on the Internet.

Encouraging violence (targeted radicalisation)

Several terrorism trials in the UK demonstrate that sermons delivered by fundamentalist preachers in the UK have on occasion directly incited racial hatred and violence. Secretly filmed at Regents Park Mosque in November 2004, Abu Izzadeen instructed a group of listeners that it is obligatory on all Muslims to physically support jihad against the enemies of Islam and the unbelievers. Specifically, he told them, ‘there is a western crusade against Muslims and therefore terrorism is a legitimate part of the deen of Islam. Muslims must terrorise the enemies of Islam, fathers must teach their sons to become Mujahid, to ride and to shoot’.⁶⁷ In the same speech, Izzadeen argues that no unbeliever is innocent. The British government kill and rape Muslims therefore anybody who joins the army and is part of this activity should have his head removed. In 2007, Birmingham based Parvez Khan conspired to kidnap a British soldier. Thankfully, counter terrorism police intercepted him and his co-conspirators before they could act. Unfortunately, seven years later in 2014, police were unable to prevent fundamentalist Michael Adebalajo from undertaking a similar operation leading to the death of soldier Lee Rigby.

One of the most controversial preachers accused of inciting terrorism against the west is former US citizen Anwar Al-Awlaki. Initially a moderate Imam who spoke out against fundamentalism, Al-Awlaki returned to Yemen in 2004. Thereafter he began encouraging Muslims to rise up against what he argued was a concerted western campaign to suppress Islam. Courting media attention, Awlaki claimed to have encouraged Nidal Hassan, the US soldier responsible for the 2009 Fort Hood Massacre. In addition, police have linked Awlaki to British educated Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who attempted but failed to detonate explosives aboard a transatlantic flight on Christmas Day 2009. According to journalist Patrick Sawyer, between 2007 and 2009, Al-Awlaki appeared via a video link on at least seven

⁶⁷ Izzadeen ‘Talk inside Regents Park Mosque’

occasions to preach his fundamentalist views at five separate locations across the UK.⁶⁸ Until February 2010, a collection of audiotapes containing his sermons were available at a library in the predominantly Muslim district of East London, namely Tower Hamlets.⁶⁹ Police also linked Al-Awlaki to the case of Roshonara Choudary who in 2010, attempted to murder MP Stephen Timms in revenge for his support of the war in Iraq. At trial, Choudary admitted to having listened to and been influenced by sermons published on the Internet by the radical American cleric. Since recovering, MP Timms has actively sought to ban “incendiary material” on popular Internet sites in order to protect other vulnerable young people from going down the same road as Choudary.

Between 1991 and 2003, Jamaican Sheikh Abdullah el-Faisal lectured to members of the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* across the UK. Until 2005, audiocassettes and videotapes of his sermons were widely distributed through Islamic bookshops. Today, police continue to recover copies of his publications from the homes of men investigated for terrorism offences. Public access to this material is generally difficult, however, this researcher was able to view two videos recovered from the Internet. Each provides a compelling insight into what the cleric preached to followers in relation to the fundamentalist political ideology. In the first lecture entitled *jihad - Its Aims and Objectives*, Faisal endorses jihad against unbelievers (kuffar) and promotes several political narratives typically associated with the fundamentalist movement.⁷⁰ The lecture begins by making a distinction between jihad and Fitna, the latter being the correct term to describe Muslims fighting other Muslims. He states that it is not jihad when a Muslim wages war for nationalism, tribalism or to establish democracy. ‘Only he, who fights so that Allah’s word should

⁶⁸ P. Sawyer and D. Barret, ‘Detroit bomber’s mentor continues to influence British mosques and universities’, *Telegraph Online*, 2nd January 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/6924653/Detroit-bombers-mentor-continues-to-influence-British-mosques-and-universities.html>, (accessed 1st January 2013)

⁶⁹ J. Doward, ‘Airports raise global safety levels after terror attack on US jet is foiled’, *Guardian Online*, 27th December 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/26/flight-253-terrorism-al-qaida>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁷⁰ A. Al-Faisal, ‘Jihad - Its Aims and Objectives’, [online video], Global Tawhid, 25th May 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gflwIYOPZto>, accessed 11th November 2014

be superior, fights in Allah's cause'.⁷¹ Referring to the tenet of the fundamentalist political ideology that deals with the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate, Faisal claims that Muslims are suffering around the world because of the absence of Sharia. He argues that apostate dictators are responsible for the failure to implement Sharia and therefore it falls on fundamentalist Muslims to strive for their removal. Faisal points to the now deposed Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak, Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, and the former President of Iraq, Saddam Hussain as prime examples of much needed regime change. Given that Hafez Al-Assad left office in June 2000, Faisal recorded this sermon and published it before the events of 9/11.

Facilitation

Guided by the movement's political ideology, a significant number of fundamentalists acknowledge and fulfil the purported obligation to undertake jihad. At the very least, they are required to carry out training in preparation. In contrast with western armed forces, recruits for jihad have no access to structured military training programmes. Consequently, the majority rely either on historical clandestine networks established by family members or as a last resort, their own initiative to obtain training and gain access to the front line. The desire to pursue jihad is predominantly organic, albeit the result of being constantly reminded of their religious obligations. On occasion, top-down targeted recruitment of fundamentalists to undertake jihad does occur. Senior fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, Raff Pantucci, suggests that experienced facilitators proactively seek out potential recruits for jihad and encourage them to go overseas for training.

I think the role of facilitators is they provide an interesting connective tissue, they are important, and they become more important over time. They kind of become spotters, more active in the sort of recruiting edge, in some ways you can look at preachers as the flame that draws the moths, and these guys are kind of around and pick up some of the moths.⁷²

Actively targeting new recruits to pursue jihad appears to have been prevalent during the 1990s. Security services acknowledge that during this period, a constant flow of

⁷¹ Al-Faisal 'Jihad - Its Aims and Objectives'

⁷² Pantucci *Author Interview*

young Muslims from the UK travelled to Pakistan and Afghanistan to undertake military training. In 1999, the *Sunday Telegraph* published the findings of a lengthy investigation into the emerging *Islamic fundamentalist movement*. The article reports that members received weapons training at secret locations in the UK before subsequently heading to Chechnya, Kosovo, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir. The article identifies high profile preacher Anjem Choudary as a key recruiter for overseas combative jihad. Until 2001, fighting abroad was not yet a criminal offence. Choudary openly admitted at the time that volunteers trained in Britain and that this training included guns and live ammunition. Reinforcing the researcher's distinction between jihad and terrorism, Choudary's mentor and leader of the fundamentalist group Al-Muhajiroon, Omar Bakri Mohammed, told the reporter, 'volunteers are not terrorists, they are not targeting civilians and they do not target people in Britain.'⁷³ Providing weight to the validity of the Telegraph's investigation, Russia asked the British government at the time to help stem the flow of British volunteers who were swelling the ranks of Islamic insurgent groups in Chechnya.⁷⁴

Fundamentalists who undertake the task of facilitation maintain connections to insurgent groups all over the world. Personal relationships are the cornerstone of facilitation and therefore this task is almost exclusively the domain of retired mujahedeen. In order to avoid detection, facilitators will rarely visit their contacts or communicate directly. Omar Nasiri recounts his experience of covertly relaying messages between Abu Hamza Al-Masri and the leader of a jihadi training camp in Khalden, Afghanistan.⁷⁵ Police accused Al-Masri of providing hundreds of British Muslims with introductory letters that allowed them access to training handlers in Pakistan. Since the American war on terror began in 2001, the number of British volunteers for jihad has declined; the main cause of this being extensive efforts by western governments to progressively dismantle training bases in Afghanistan. The remaining sub-sections examine the most common destination for jihad training, beginning with Pakistan. Following this, we discuss three of the most prominent

⁷³ Staff Reporter, 'British Muslims 'fear' new terrorism law', *BBC News Online*, 19th February 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1178171.stm>, accessed 11th November 2014

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ O. Nasiri, *Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda: A Spy's Story*, New York, Basic Books, 2006

facilitators between the late 1990s and 2005 and the role humanitarian convoys play in facilitating British Muslims to pursue jihad. This method of reaching the front line has been particularly common in respect of the Syrian civil war. Since 2010, British Muslims have volunteered to join aid convoys with the deliberate intention of joining insurgent groups upon arriving at refugee camps in Turkey. In concluding this section, focus turns to identifying the difficulties faced by the British government in attempting to shut down the networks used by facilitators.

Pakistan

As one of the most dangerous and lawless countries in the world, Pakistan has always been a well-known destination for British Muslims with a desire to pursue jihad. Between 2003 and 2006, a mere six CIA drone strikes killed just nine militants in the border regions of Pakistan. In stark contrast and reflecting the importance of Pakistan in the war on terror, since 2007 when President Obama came to office there have been over three hundred and fifty such strikes, eliminating two thousand active militants in the country. Alleged number three in Al-Qaeda, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, complained that drone-launched missiles were killing his operatives faster than he could replace them.⁷⁶ Former head of Counter Terrorism Command (SO15), Richard Walton has remarked, 'British Muslims continue to go to the tribal areas of Pakistan for training with access provided by a number of facilitators in the UK'.⁷⁷

Jahan Mahmood is a counter-radicalisation worker based in Birmingham. Drawing upon his previous experience of engaging with young men that have trained in Pakistan, he offers the following account describing how they commonly gained access to the camps:

It's very easy to go to Pakistan and just to meet people who are connected to someone who knows someone. Therefore you don't need an uncle in Kashmir. if you already have the links to start off with, it makes life easier. But anyone who is really motivated, does not necessarily need to have a link. He can quite easily go over, I am sure there are people in this country, British Pakistanis

⁷⁶ Staff Reporter, 'Osama bin Laden complained of al Qaeda 'disaster'', *International Tribune Herald*, 30th April 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/372284/osama-bin-laden-complained-of-al-qaeda-disaster-disaster/>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁷⁷ Author interview with Richard Walton, London, 7th August 2013

who have gone over and just told someone else in clandestine fashion, this is how you do it. Networks of families as well who know each other, Kashmiris here connected to what is going on in their homeland.⁷⁸

Mahmood appears to suggest that gaining access to a training camp in Pakistan is relatively straightforward. Not everyone shares his opinion. Respected print journalist Duncan Gardham has written extensively on the subject of jihad over a period of at least ten years. In his experience, language barriers have often made it difficult for British Muslims to both gain access to camps and later progress to the front line in Afghanistan.⁷⁹ Disputing the commonly held belief that if one is Pakistani, it must be easy to gain contacts in Afghanistan, Gardham points out that Pakistan has many ethnic groups with their own customs and dialects.⁸⁰ Since the majority of British Muslims are of Punjabi or Kashmiri heritage, in order to access the tribal regions bordering Afghanistan, they need to learn Pashto and Dari. Failing this, they require support from both UK and Pakistani based facilitators. Since 2001, the number of potential facilitators has steadily declined. Reflecting generally on the importance of facilitators to those pursuing jihad, Gardham explains:

Some [jihadist] had links dating back to the 90's and some of them had family links back there and some of them had just rocked up at the right time in the right moment and ended up in the tribal areas. So the fixers came three different groups. The old school jihadist who had been there, done that, and then come back, the guys who had family links already there which made it easy for them to do, or spoke the language, and the guys who had fortuitously turned up at the right time and were still able to communicate from inside. So those three different groups provided invaluable links. Abu Hamza Al-Masri would come into the first category, Junaid Babar would probably come into the second and then probably Rashid Rauf into the third.⁸¹

Although many British Muslims have specifically sought out jihad training camps in Pakistan, Osbourne has said that in some instances, this was not their initial intention. In some cases, British Muslims have gone to Pakistan in order to attend religious

⁷⁸ Mahmood *Author Interview*

⁷⁹ Author interview with Duncan Gardham, London, 18th September 2013

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

schools (madrassas). Osbourne explains that during their religious studies, experienced facilitators spot the most religiously devout. Through gradual radicalisation, recruits are convinced to go to training camps and later pursue jihad. The full account is given by Osbourne in interview:

So a pleasant faced individual that had some good intent, went into the training camps that were initially religious training camps not actually focused on jihad. At that point within that religious training camp they were introduced first of all to the Quran and it was fairly moderate, as it progressed it became slightly more hard line and then the discussion turned into jihad and whether people would be prepared to engage in it. At the end of that first phase there was an unseen selection criteria going on...those who didn't take the bait around jihad, were thanked very much and they went off and they carried on their normal lives. Those who stayed then moved on to military training camps.⁸²

Certainly not all British Muslims were recruited from the Madrassas. Many who travelled to Pakistan had the deliberate intention of pursuing jihad and merely sought an introduction to one of the training camps. Pantucci describes the way in which jihad training may be seen as a simple financial transaction:

I go over there and I say I want to train... and after some digging around and careful looking, I find a Harakat ul-Mujahedeen guy or some person who says I might know someone and I persuade him... now the groups will still take you to train because they are mercenary. If you show up and say I will pay £5000 for you to train me, they will go OK we will take your money and we'll let you dig ditches for 5 days and then say that we've trained you..then once you're in that process, you're in that community, you're in those groups. Who else do you meet, and you meet others who might give you connections to go somewhere else and do more, and get deeper in and so you know I think getting that first foothold would take effort but I think its doable.⁸³

The remaining sub sections examine high profile individuals accused of performing the task of facilitation. Following the review of three recognised facilitators, an

⁸² Osbourne *Author Interview*

⁸³ Pantucci *Author Interview*

examination is made of how aid conveys (in particular since 2010 and the civil war in Syria) have also unwittingly served as facilitators, providing cover for British Muslims seeking to travel to conflict regions in order to participate in jihad. In concluding this section, we review British government attempts to shut down the facilitation networks that fundamentalists use in order to pursue overseas jihad training

Mohammed Quyyum Khan

Also known as Q, Khan is an Islamic fundamentalist typically associated with 2003 fertilizer plot along with the London bombers.⁸⁴ Married with several children, journalists allege that that he served as a prolific UK facilitator until 2005 with extensive links to militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The former president of Luton Central mosque, Haji Sulaiman, accused Khan of bringing other fundamentalists, in particular Omar Bakri Mohammed to the location forcing him to refuse their entry.⁸⁵ Respected documentary maker Peter Taylor has claimed that Khan is responsible for sending two of the July 7th London bombers to Pakistan for military training.⁸⁶ Former jihadist turned police informant, Junaid Babar, supports Taylor's accusation. Testifying at the trial of three men accused of being involved in the July 7th plot, Babar claimed to have been told by ring-leader Mohammed Sidique Khan, that Q had sent him to Pakistan to determine whether it was possible for British Muslims to cross the border and pursue jihad in Afghanistan.⁸⁷ Counter terrorism police interviewed Khan over his role as a facilitator, but found insufficient evidence to file any charges. Privately, officers claim that evidence, which prosecutors could

⁸⁴ I. Cobain, 'Free - the man accused of being an al-Qaida leader, aka 'Q'', *The Guardian Online*, 1st May 2007, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/may/01/politics.topstories3>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ P. Taylor, 'Generation Jihad', [online audio], *BBC World Service*, 5th April 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/documentaries/2010/03/100302_generation_jihad_part_one.shtml, (accessed 11th November 2011)

⁸⁷ R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) [2009] EWCA Crim 2396

not introduce in court, demonstrated just how invaluable Khan was to British Muslims in their efforts to pursue jihad training in Pakistan.⁸⁸

Abu Qatada Al-Filistini

Detained without trial for almost ten years and publically admonished by the British government, Muslim cleric Abu Qatada inspired a generation of fundamentalists. Authorities first detained Qatada in 2002 on allegations that he was facilitating the pursuit of jihad and inciting acts of terrorism overseas. Prosecutors claimed that Qatada met leader of Al-Qaeda Osama Bin Laden on several occasions before the events on 9/11 and later served as his right hand man in the UK. Formally trained as an Islamic scholar in Saudi Arabia, Qatada professed to hold expert understanding on the teachings of Islam.⁸⁹ In the opinion of Omar Nasiri, Qatada held significant influence over fundamentalists who accepted every ruling he issued. Even today, despite prohibition, audiotapes of his sermons continue to be widely distributed amongst members of the fundamentalist movement. Lawyers acting for the government alleged that Qatada retained direct links to Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and that he facilitated British Muslims to pursue jihad by giving them necessary letters of introduction. Nasiri confirms that throughout the 90s, British Muslims were regularly going off to fight in overseas but in order to gain access to training camps, they required an introductory piece of paper given to them by Qatada. During his time infiltrating the fundamentalist movement in London, Nasiri warned his MI5 handlers that Qatada posed a far more significant threat than the more visible Abu Hamza Al-Masri. In September 2014, a Jordanian court cleared Abu Qatada of any involvement in terrorism, the British government however, refused to allow him to return to the UK.⁹⁰

Abu Hamza Al-Masri

⁸⁸ Author interview with Anonymous SO15 Counter Terrorism Officer, London, New Scotland Yard, 28th August 2013

⁸⁹ Counter Terrorism Officer *Author interview*

⁹⁰ J. Kelly, 'Abu Qatada cleared of terror charges', *BBC News Online*, 24th September 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-29340656>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

In 1997, Al-Masri began preaching at Finsbury Park Mosque. Elders had invited him to resolve tensions between South Asian and North African worshipers. After the massacre of six British tourists by Islamic fundamentalist terrorists in Egypt, MI5 spoke to Al-Masri about his sermons. Officers told him that he had freedom of speech and had nothing to worry about as long as there was no blood on British streets. There is strong evidence to suggest that he complied with this warning. Between the summer of 1996 and August 1998, MI5 agent Omar Nasiri infiltrated the mosque and attended sermons given by Mustafa. Nasiri later claimed in his book 'Inside the Jihad', that Abu Hamza was inciting his followers to attack just about everywhere else, but never within England.⁹¹ Before his arrest and subsequent detention in 2004 on charges of inciting racial hatred and murder, Al-Masri enjoyed widespread support and adulation amongst the UK fundamentalist movement. Respect for the cleric as an authority on jihad appears to have been elevated because he was outspoken against the west and claimed to have lost his hands fighting in Afghanistan. In contrast with Abu Qatada, Al-Masri lacked a strong religious background. Notwithstanding this, he was able to attract significant donations from fundamentalist sympathizers, which he then used to facilitate Muslims who expressed an interest in training in Pakistan and fighting in Afghanistan. British Muslims who had had an interest in jihad gravitated towards him for inspiration, guidance, introductions and funding.⁹²

The initial 2004 arrest of Al-Masri occurred due to an extradition request by the US. Prosecutors alleged that he was part of a global terror network who had actively plotted terrorism against the west. In early 2012, the European Court of Human Rights prevented the extradition due to concerns that Al-Masri would suffer cruel and unusual punishment. On 5 October 2012 after a lengthy court battle, the British government extradited Al-Masri along with four other terror suspects. On trial in New York, he faced charges that included plotting to set up a terror camp in rural Oregon, providing support for terrorists in Afghanistan and conspiracy in relation to the kidnapping of American tourists in Yemen in 1998. Although Al-Masri denied all of the charges against him, the jury found him guilty and as of October 2014, he awaits sentencing. Demonstrating the role Al-Masri played as a significant facilitator

⁹¹ Omar Nasiri, *Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda: A Spy's Story*, New York, Basic Books, 2006

⁹² Counter Terrorism Officer *Author interview*

within the *Islamic fundamentalist movement*, US Attorney General Preet Bharara commented, ‘Abu Hamza was not just a preacher of faith, but a trainer of terrorists’.⁹³

Babar Ahmed

In 2013, British born and raised Ahmed pleaded guilty in a US court to the criminal offence of supporting “terrorists” based in Afghanistan.⁹⁴ According to prosecutors, Ahmed served as the administer of a series of websites that sought to raise cash, recruit fighters and solicit equipment including gas masks, flares and camping items needed by fighters on the front line. Under a plea deal, he avoided a more serious charge of conspiracy to murder in relation to his facilitation of British Muslims attempting to pursue jihad. Over a period of several years, Ahmed is alleged to have served as a committed fundamentalist, maintaining extensive contacts to mujahedeen in Afghanistan.⁹⁵ A close associate of preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri, Ahmed acted as a facilitator by enabling British Muslims in his close circle to obtain military training in Pakistan. Funding for this enterprise came from the sale of fundamentalist literature and media publications including audiotapes of various sermons that encouraged individuals to adopt the fundamentalist political ideology and carry out activities in support of the mujahedeen. According to a London based counter terrorism officer, Ahmed was responsible for sending the failed shoe bomber Sajid Badat to Afghanistan in pursuit of jihad.⁹⁶ Like many other young fundamentalist Muslims, Ahmed provided Badat with the finance and necessary introduction that eventually led him to meet up with an Al-Qaeda handler who convinced him to join Richard Reid on a suicide mission targeting planes bound for the US.

Humanitarian aid convoys

⁹³ Staff Reporter, ‘Profile: Abu Hamza’, *BBC News Online*, 9th May 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11701269>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁹⁴ Staff Reporter, ‘British terrorist Babar Ahmad pleads guilty in U.S. court to running terrorist website and faces 25 years in jail’, *Daily Mail Online*, 11th December 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2521780/British-terrorist-Babar-Ahmad-pleads-guilty-U-S-court-running-terrorist-website-faces-25-years-jail.html>

⁹⁵ Counter Terrorism Officer *Author interview*

⁹⁶ Counter Terrorism Officer *Author interview*

Facilitation is not limited to specific individuals. International relief organisations maintain networks and supply routes to Islamic conflicts all around the world. They provide a vital link exploited by fundamentalists seeking to avoid detection when gaining to the front line. In 1999, a court in Yemen convicted Shahid Butt along with a group of other young British Muslims of plotting to commit acts of terrorism in the country.⁹⁷ Four years earlier, Butt pursued jihad in Bosnia against Serbian forces and afterwards sought to help overthrow the western backed Yemeni government. Interviewed about his experience, Butt rejected any suggestion of being radicalised or indeed motivated by any particular political or religious ideology. From his own account, 'he was simply at the mosque when a visiting preacher showed a video detailing widespread atrocities committed by Serbian forces against Muslim women and children'.⁹⁸ Initially this led him to volunteer for a relief convey taking much needed humanitarian aid to the region. When there was no more food to hand out, he felt pained and believed he could not leave because of the stories he had heard. Coincidentally he found himself introduced to two Arab fighters who invited him to join them in the pursuit of jihad.⁹⁹ Although in the case there appears no prior intention to fight, it more likely demonstrates the deliberate attempt by experienced fighters to recruit British Muslims. Since 2010, the practice of recruiting "aid volunteers" has become common in refugee camps along the Turkish border with Syria. Pantucci has commented on this practice and offers the following informative account:

You drive across Europe with a bunch of brothers, trucks filled with aid and whatever else. You get to Turkey and dump it at a refugee camp. Then you are wandering around the refugee camp and meet a guy who says: hey you know, great to see you brother, you've come all the way from England, that's so wonderful, you want to try to shoot a gun?¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ D. Kennedy, 'World: Middle East Britons convicted of Yemen bomb plot', *BBC News Online*, 9th August 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/415096.stm, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁹⁸ Mahmood *Author interview*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Pantucci *Author Interview*

Chairperson of the British Charity commission William Shawcross believes the link between “charity” groups and terrorist organizations is either frequently not recognized or more disingenuously ignored.¹⁰¹ In 2014, he expressed his deep concern that fundamentalists were using charities as vehicles for the recruitment of British Muslims to fight overseas.¹⁰² Speaking publically about the growing threat, Shawcross warned, ‘the problem of Islamist extremism... is not the most widespread problem we face in terms of abuse of charities but is potentially the most deadly... and it is growing.’¹⁰³ His comments followed the discovery that British suicide bomber Abdul Waheed Majeed had travelled to Syria by way of an organised humanitarian aid convoy.¹⁰⁴ Media reports link the father-of-three from Crawley who blew himself up at the entrance to a Syrian jail to fundamentalist preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed. Openly acknowledging the relationship, Bakri described the 41-year-old as a ‘very dear brother’.¹⁰⁵ According to a report by CTC Sentinel, Abdul Majeed had a long history of fundamentalist activity, an allegation that highlights the persistent and long-term terrorist threat such individuals pose.¹⁰⁶ Following the suicide bombing in Syria and to the detriment of thousands of Muslim refugees, mosques in Crawley made the decision to halt humanitarian missions to the region. Publically, Muslim leaders expressed concerns that members of insurgent groups lie in wait for volunteers

¹⁰¹ M. Curtis, ‘Telling the Truth about Terrorism and Islamic Charities’, *American Thinker*, 26th April 2014, http://www.americanthinker.com/2014/04/telling_the_truth_about_terrorism_and_islamic_charities.html, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ C. Greenwood, ‘Are Syria charities a front for Jihadists? Fears convoys in the country are being used to help militants after thousands in cash is seized’, *Daily Mail Online*, 14th February 2014, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2559042/Are-Syria-charities-jihadists-Fears-convoys-country-used-help-militants-thousands-cash-seized.html, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁰⁵ C. Greenwood, ‘British jihadist who died driving truck full of explosives into Syrian prison is revealed to be former driver for hate cleric Omar Bakri as footage of his suicide assault emerges’, *Daily Mail Online*, 13th February 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2558463/Driving-doom-Rebels-release-footage-British-jihadist-driving-truck-explosives-suicide-assault-Syrian-prison.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁰⁶ R. Pantucci, ‘The British Foreign Fighter Contingent in Syria’, *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 7, Issue 5, May 2014, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/may-2014>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

travelling on aid convoys before encouraging them to join the civil war once inside the country.¹⁰⁷

In February 2013, clerics from Green Lane Mosque in Birmingham lectured at the Greenwich Islamic Centre in London. Highlighting the deteriorating situation in Syria and atrocities carried out by government forces in the country, the visiting Imam encouraged members of the congregation to do everything in their power to help support refugees as well as the opposition movement. In a private video shown during the lecture, the visiting Imam appeared at a hospital in Aleppo, Syria where he interviewed both civilians and opposition fighters. At the end of the evening, a member of the delegation approached two young Afghani men and asked them if they were interested in volunteering on an aid convoy due to depart the following week.¹⁰⁸ Given the insular nature of Muslim communities and charities in the UK, it is difficult to accept those who organise such aid convoys are blissfully unaware of how fundamentalists have used them to gain access to the front line undetected.

Engaging in holy war (combative jihad)

British Muslims have readily engaged in religious armed conflict overseas since the early 1990s. According to UK security agencies, as of 2008, more than four thousand had passed through Pakistani training camps before going on to fight Indian forces in Kashmir and coalition forces in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁹ When political unrest led to civil war in Syria, an increasing number of British Muslims travelled to the region to fight against government forces. Initially, volunteers joined non-fundamentalist groups seeking to replace President Assad with a progressive democratic government. By 2014 however, the majority of foreign fighters were serving with the hardline Islamic fundamentalist group known as ISIS. It is important to recognize that while a

¹⁰⁷ Staff Reporter, 'Crawley mosques ban trips to Syria due to Abdul Waheed Majeed being suspected of being UK suicide bomber', *Crawley News Online*, 19th Feb 2014, <http://www.crawleynews.co.uk/Abdul-Waheed-Majeed-travelled-Syria-aid-convoy/story-20657949-detail/story.html#ixzz2tp4Pb0zg>, (accessed 4th March 2015)

¹⁰⁸ Author attendance at Greenwich Islamic Centre, London, 20th June 2013

¹⁰⁹ K. Sengupta, 'British Muslims have become a mainstay of the global jihad', *Independent Online*, 29th November 2008, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/british-muslims-have-become-a-mainstay-of-the-global-jihad-1040232.html>, (accessed 4th March 2015)

significant number of British Muslims train for jihad, it is a small a minority who make it to the front line. Upon completing basic training, the majority of recruits return home and resume normal life.¹¹⁰

In the following sub section, we begin by arguing that jihad is not necessarily synonymous with terrorism. Differentiation is required because academic research conflating the motivation to pursue jihad with the motivation to kill civilians is arguably, methodologically flawed. British foreign policy, commonly cited as the motivation behind terrorism in the UK, played no role in convincing fundamentalists to fight in Bosnia, Kashmir, or more recently in Syria. Unlike the July 7th London bombers, the hundreds of young Muslims in the UK currently fighting against President Assad are not seeking to liberate a country from western occupation. With the distinction between a jihadist and a terrorist in mind, this section then goes on to examine the motivations behind westernised Muslims who give up comfortable, relatively care free lives in the UK, for the harsh conditions encountered on the front line in Afghanistan and more recently Syria. The second half of this section reviews popular destinations chosen by British Muslims to pursue jihad.

Jihad is not synonymous with terrorism

British Muslims who fought with the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Kashmir would not consider themselves terrorists. Until recently, the British government did not denounce those who volunteered to fight in the Syrian civil war as terrorists either. In 2010, western foreign policy concentrated on regime change, or at the very least, the removal of President Assad. Islamic fundamentalists that initially fought with the Free Syrian Army enjoyed tacit approval in their pursuit of jihad. By late 2013, it became clear that British Muslims were rapidly switching allegiance from moderate opposition to hard-line Islamist groups, firstly Al-Nusra and then ISIS. Concerned about the potential threat posed by these fighters returning home to pursue terrorism, police and security services announced a clampdown. The message from government became acutely clear; any British Muslims who travelled to Syria in order participate in the civil war, faced arrest and prosecution upon their return. Although

¹¹⁰ Alleged to have carried out reconnaissance for the London bombers, Wahid Ali testified that despite the high number of recruits for jihad, only a small percentage actually makes it to the front line. Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) [2009], 223.

not all jihadists' progress on to become terrorists, almost all terrorists begin as jihadists. Three noteworthy examples include shoe bomber Saajid Badat and Guantanamo bay detainees Feroze Abassi and Martin Mubanga.¹¹¹ All three individuals engaged for several years in the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* before travelling to Afghanistan to pursue jihad and later acts of terrorism.

Historically there has been a subjective distinction within western politics between terrorists and freedom fighters. Competing national interests explain the absence of any kind of universal agreement on what constitutes a terrorist and what differentiates them from *insurgents* and or *revolutionaries*. Former US president Ronald Reagan once famously equated the Taliban to America's founding fathers. In October 2014, the Emir of Qatar spoke to CNN saying; 'some of the groups we fund in Syria and Libya are considered terrorist groups by the US but not by us'.¹¹² Perhaps always a false dichotomy, after 9/11 and the commencement of the war on terror however, seemingly all fundamentalist Muslims engaged in armed conflict faced proscription under UK counter terrorism legislation. It is important to ask whether pursuing jihad makes one a terrorist regardless of political ideology or the degree of international legitimacy afforded to whatever conflict they engage in. Arguably, western leaders have refrained from referring to insurgents responsible for overthrowing former Libyan dictator Muhammar Gaddafi, as terrorists. Recognised as revolutionaries, Muslims who contributed to his downfall received widespread praise from western politicians cynically hoping to do business in the oil rich country.

In August 2013 before the rise of ISIS, former head of SO15 Richard Walton confirmed his unit were tracking a number of British Muslims fighting in Syria. At the time of interview, he concurred with the proposition that these men did not constitute terrorists.¹¹³ Less than a year later, tacit approval turned to outright persecution. Home Secretary Theresa May appeared steadfast in her condemnation of

¹¹¹ Email correspondence between author and anonymous counter terrorism officer from SO15 New Scotland Yard, September 2013

¹¹² C. Amanpour, 'Qatar responds to terror funding charges', [online video], *CNN*, 25th September 2014, http://edition.cnn.com/video/standard.html?/video/world/2014/09/25/intv-amanpour-qatar-emir-sheikh-tamim-bin-hamad-al-thani-extremists.cnn&video_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fm.facebook.com, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹¹³ Walton *Author interview*

fundamentalists who had travelled to the region in order to pursue jihad. Throughout 2013, Filmmaker Ben Allinson-Davies spent a significant amount of time in Syria interviewing foreign fighters.¹¹⁴ Critical of how the British government has sought to homogenise fundamentalist insurgents into a single group now disingenuously referred to as terrorists, Davies contends those who commit violence against non-combatants represent a tiny minority of the total contingent of foreign fighters. For the majority of participants in the Syrian civil war, the aim is to overthrow Assad and establish an Islamic Caliphate – neither act constituting terrorism per se.

These young men have families, friends and close ties with their home countries. The last thing they would want to do is to come home and harm their nation and their family's chances, especially when their goal is to fight to defend oppressed people. Most are young men (predominantly Muslims) who are moved by the wholesale slaughter and genocide of a whole population, and feel the need to act. They simply feel that they cannot stay away as the death toll rises, and very few people seem willing to do anything.¹¹⁵

Birmingham based counter radicalisation worker Jahan Mahmood, also rejects the conflation of jihad and terrorism, arguing it is a dangerous misconception amongst government policy makers.¹¹⁶ In making the comparison, he is specifically contrasting jihadists with the extreme fundamentalists responsible for plotting suicide-bombing campaigns against British citizens in the UK. Several of the individuals involved in terrorism since 2003 have no history of pursuing jihad: Mahmood refers to them as *clean skins*.¹¹⁷ Questioned about the link between jihad and terrorism, an experienced counter terrorism officer could list only three individuals whom he was aware of having previously fought jihad before later going on to pursue terrorism.¹¹⁸ The implication is jihad does not necessarily serve as pre-cursor or have any radicalising

¹¹⁴ B. Allinson-Davies, 'The Vilification of Foreign Fighters in the Syrian 'Conflict'', *Unfettered Freedom For All!*, [web blog], 3rd February 2014, <http://unfetteredfreedom.wordpress.com/2014/02/03/the-vilification-of-foreign-fighters-in-the-syrian-conflict>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Mahmood *Author Interview*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Email correspondence between author and anonymous counter terrorism officer from SO15 New Scotland Yard, September 2013

effect such that a fundamentalist becomes any more conducive to pursuing terrorism than those with no such prior experience. Mahmood suggests there are clear difference between humanitarian jihadists and the ‘extremist thuggish terrorists intent on killing British citizens as well as British soldiers on the streets of London’. ¹¹⁹

Adebolajo is the thuggish urban jihadi, there is a difference. These thuggish urban jihadists are not the same as the international jihadist. Even in the international jihadis you have a problem. Some will resort to suicide methods. Most of the guys going from here do not have the suicide bombing mentality. They have a different take and interpretation. Some of these so called religious leaders encouraging people to fight, they are brainwashing people to use a military strategy that we call suicide bombing. The guys going from here to Syria do not see that as an option. ¹²⁰

Playing down the need to track humanitarian jihadists due to fears they may be radicalised abroad, Mahmood points out that if they were going to kill innocent civilians they would have done it here: ‘Instead, they are going off to fight in what they believe to be legitimate armed combat that has absolutely nothing at all to do with either terrorism or groups like Al-Qaeda’. ¹²¹

Offering his account of the distinction between terrorists and jihadists, retired former head of counter terrorism Stuart Osbourne has commented:

The academic scholars would say that there is. They would say that the definition of jihad is not necessarily about terrorism its about the struggle and the terrorist, depending on which book you read is using a sense of violence to achieve a political purpose. ¹²²

In his own opinion, Osborne suggests there are a lot of British people fighting out in Syria because they think it’s the right thing to do morally and religiously. ¹²³ Pointedly

¹¹⁹ Mahmood *Author Interview*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Osbourne *Author Interview*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

in respect of the jihadist/terrorist dictum, he concludes by arguing, 'to say that everyone that has gone out to Syria is a terrorist is an oversimplification'.¹²⁴

Pantucci suggests that as long as a jihadist returns to the UK after fighting and does nothing, then he does not necessarily fulfill the criteria necessary for him to be prosecuted as a terrorist.

I think that you know if you were to talk to most Islamists, they would say yes there is a very strong separation between the two; there are two very different concepts. Two very different notions, what I would say- I would say historically we have seen yes some individuals who go off and fight will come back and do absolutely nothing, will go back to day to day lives, they tend to have issues because they've seen a pretty horrific experience.¹²⁵

Drawing on extensive interviews with former jihadists, Duncan Gardham strongly supports the proposition that jihad is an entirely different concept to terrorism focused predominantly on attacking defenseless civilians. British fundamentalist Muslims interviewed by Gardham believed strongly in fighting what they believe is a just war to bring Islam to the world but who do not believe in killing innocent civilians either in the UK or abroad.¹²⁶ Based on his experience, Gardham suggests terrorism is about bringing terror to a population by means of killing usually defenseless civilians while jihad is a different concept, 'which involves in the first place struggle and where necessary physical struggle against whatever the obstacles to Islam are. So they are entirely different ideas'.¹²⁷ Asked in September 2013 before the emergence of ISIS, whether British Muslims who have taken up arms against Syrian President Assad are terrorists, Gardham suggests it is a very difficult area but that volunteers wouldn't see themselves as terrorists, rather they see themselves as freedom fighters. The danger he believes is whether they want to engage in attacking the west when they return. Specifically he argues, 'they are really only terrorists if they have a desire to kidnap or kill or blow up innocent people as a direct aim as part of their method to achieve victory'.¹²⁸ Reflecting more generally on the terrorist threat to the UK posed by

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Pantucci *Author Interview*

¹²⁶ Gardham *Author Interview*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

British fundamentalist Muslims fighting Syria, Gardham believes, ‘there are lots of jihadists who have returned to the UK and not done anything. ...and also even when they were out there fought a reasonably conventional battle, so the people I’m always writing about will probably come back [from Syria] and not do anything.’¹²⁹

Motivation to take up arms

There is a general distinction between what motivates a fundamentalist to pursue jihad and what motivates an extreme fundamentalist to engage in terrorism. Based on conviction rates, there is a strong indication that only a minority of Muslims agree with the legitimacy of terrorism and suicide bombing. It is important therefore, that researchers consider this distinction when drawing any conclusions. Scholarly work that relies on firsthand accounts given by veteran jihadists, may not reliably extrapolate to explain the rationale behind British Muslims who volunteer for suicide bombing. Consensus suggests that western foreign policy adequately accounts for what motivates British fundamentalists to commit acts of terrorism against fellow citizens. However, there is little merit to any proposition that foreign policy has motivated the same type of persons to pursue jihad in Kashmir, Bosnia or more recently Syria. A desire to protect co-religionists and establish an Islamic Caliphate offers a far more reasonable explanation.

At the elementary level, many British jihadists present a rebellious based eagerness to escape from the mundane reality of organised marriage. To young Muslims rejecting a future of working in the family business and raising a family, jihad represents an escape route. Many who pursue this option do so in collaboration with close friends. Consequently, when a fundamentalist has become committed to go and fight on the front line, peer pressure and a desire not to upset friends, makes it difficult to leave the activity once it has started.¹³⁰ In videos depicting the activities of jihadists, participants constantly refer to the Quran and of a desire to fight for the sake of Allah. Religion strongly motivates these individuals who constantly talk about the glory and divine rewards afforded to those killed on the battlefield while fighting against the enemies of Islam. There is little evidence to suggest western Muslims

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Counter Terrorism Officer *Author Interview*

volunteer to serve with the mujahedeen for money or glory any other reason other than their strongly fundamentalist beliefs, both political and religious.

Many of the recruits who give up relatively comfortable lives in the west to pursue jihad, consider it a kind of religious rite of passage. An obligation fulfilled by fundamentalist Muslims before marriage and the perceived drudgery of family life within the same neighbourhood in which they grew up. If only for a relatively short period, jihad may be considered a form of escapism. For the more experienced jihadist, simple romanticism, camaraderie and an opportunity to fire AK-47's with friends' offers more than sufficient incentives.¹³¹ Mark McCauley's concept of male bonding as a powerful motivation for jihad, commands a broad consensus. He argues the pull of comradeship can be as strong as politics in directing individuals towards underground groups.¹³² Transcending the social spectrum, volunteers hail from a diverse mix of socio-economic backgrounds. Defying attempts to profile a "typical jihadist", evidence suggests recruits range from bored teenage bachelors with limited career prospects to wealthy married men employed in senior management.¹³³ The only common denominator one can deduce from the available evidence concerns their involvement in Islamic fundamentalism. Growing consensus suggests the fundamentalist movement serves as a production line, drawing in naïve young Muslims at one end, churning out jihadists and potential terrorists at the other.

Jihad is not an activity pursued by all fundamentalist Muslims living in the UK. Generally, those who do, find motivation in their religious belief that it is an obligation commanded of them by God. Jahan Mahmood suggests British Muslims travel overseas to wage jihad for two very simple reasons. Firstly, they strongly believe they can change society and feel obliged to do something to prevent the deaths of co-religionists. Secondly, they have no fear of death. On the contrary, for the

¹³¹ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) et al [2009] EWCA Crim 2396. 223.

¹³² C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko, 'Mechanisms of Political Radicalisation: Pathways toward Terrorism'. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol 20, no. 3, 2008, pp. 415-433

¹³³ D. Jones, 'What drove a British estate agent and his maths tutor brother to die as jihadists? How seemingly decent young men are living terrifying doubles lives', *Daily Mail Online*, 5th February 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2552607/What-drove-British-estate-agent-maths-tutor-brother-die-jihadists-How-seemingly-decent-young-men-living-terrifying-doubles-lives.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

majority, dying on the battlefield and thus becoming a martyr constitutes a primary objective. London bomber, Mohammed Sidique Khan, appears to have expressed this very desire in a video recorded shortly before he left to fight in Afghanistan towards the end of 2004. Consistent with many of those who had gone before him, Khan believed the moment he shed blood on the battlefield, Allah would forgive all of his sins. Fundamentalists perceive jihad, specifically dying while fighting the enemies of Islam to be a fast track route to heaven.¹³⁴ British Muslims that have fought in Syria appear particularly motivated by the real possibility of establishing a Caliphate. For years, preachers told fundamentalists the Caliphate represents heaven on earth. Unsurprisingly, the success of insurgent group ISIS, caused a significant number of British fundamentalists to travel to Syria in order to live and die if necessary within the Islamic State declared by Caliph Abu Bakri Al-Baghdadi in May 2014.¹³⁵

Popular destinations

Until at least 2000, British fundamentalist Muslims regularly pursued jihad within conflict zones throughout the world. Counter terrorism officers at Scotland Yard held limited intelligence on the activity because at the time it was not yet a criminal offence.¹³⁶ In the years following 9/11, partially inspired by the so called “magnificent 19”, the number of organized fundamentalist Muslims in the UK increased exponentially.¹³⁷ As a direct consequence, more individuals volunteered for jihad, travelling first to Pakistan for training and then on to Afghanistan to engage in combat.¹³⁸ In the last ten years, there have been a series of figures published detailing the most popular destinations for new recruits. Between 1997 and 2000, as many as two hundred British Muslims had fought on the front lines in Chechnya, Kashmir and

¹³⁴ Mahmood *Author Interview*

¹³⁵ Staff Reporter, ‘Sunni rebels declare new Islamic caliphate’, *Al-Jazeera*, 30th June 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/isil-declares-new-islamic-caliphate-201462917326669749.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹³⁶ Counter Terrorism Officer *Author Interview*

¹³⁷ Staff Reporter, ‘Group hails 9/11 Magnificent 19’, *CNN News Online*, 10th September 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/09/10/sept.11.ukposter>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

¹³⁸ SO15 Officer *Author Interview*

Afghanistan. One such individual, Salman Abdulla, pursued jihad in the late 1990s and regular attended sermons given by Abu Hamza Al-Masri.

Speaking candidly on the subject, Abdulla estimates that from Finsbury Park Mosque alone, at least fifty devout fundamentalist Muslims died while fighting in an overseas conflict.¹³⁹ As part of the *Good Friday Agreement* in Northern Ireland, the British government introduced a more permanent terrorism act to replace the temporary provisions used in relation to the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The terrorism act 2000 made it a criminal offence for any citizen to engage in an overseas conflict, except for a recognised state, e.g. the Israeli Defence Force. Despite the new legislation, Islamic fundamentalists continued to volunteer for jihad - God's law prevailed over those set by man. The remainder of this section examines the most common destinations, in particular Syria. By 2014, this rapidly collapsing state had attracted thousands of Islamic fundamentalists from all around the world, each drawn by the promise of a new Caliphate, one that would restore the Muslim nation to its former glory.

Somalia

Considered a failed state since 1993, Somalia has long served as a testing ground for British fundamentalist Muslims pursuing jihad. When the Islamic insurgent group *Al-Shabbaab* took over the capital Mogadishu in 2007, the British newspaper, *The Independent*, identified a significant number of young Somalis from London that were actively fighting against government forces in the region.¹⁴⁰ Demonstrating a division between moderate and fundamentalist Muslims, one jihadists from the UK acting as a bodyguard for Islamist commander Sheik Yusuf, told reporters, 'the only true Muslims are the ones who are honest and who are patriots. We are doing our duty by fighting for the cause of Islam, which is above all countries.'¹⁴¹ Highlighting the

¹³⁹ R. Simcox, 'Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections', *The Centre for Social Cohesion*, 2010,
http://conservativehome.blogs.com/files/1278089320islamist_terrorism_preview.pdf,
(accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁴⁰ K. Sengupta, 'British Muslims have become a mainstay of the global 'jihad'', *The Independent Online*, 29th November 2008,
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/british-muslims-have-become-a-mainstay-of-the-global-jihad-1040232.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

problem of interference from western Muslims, the Somali government accused Britain of being ‘the number one source of finance and new recruits for insurgent groups seeking to establish an Islamic state’.¹⁴² In 2009, Jonathan Evans, head of the domestic security service MI5, confirmed that British Muslims from the UK were being actively indoctrinated in Somalia and engaging in the fight against government forces.¹⁴³ CIA director Michael Hayden warned the civil conflict waging across the country had proved to be a “catalyst” for recruiting expatriate Somalis in the west, echoing comments made by Evans. By 2013, MI5 ranked the country alongside Yemen and Pakistan, as one of the top three regions in the world that posed a potential terrorist threat to the UK.

Since roughly 2006, the most renowned Islamic insurgent group in Somalia to attract British Muslims has been *Al-Shabaab*. Devolved from the more organised opposition movement known as the Islamist Court Union (ICU), Al-Shabaab are accused of having close ties with both Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb as well as Boko Haram. Consequently, the civil war in Somalia represents a significant threat to international peace and security, in particular the security of the UK. In part, this comes from the danger that British Muslims who fight in the region, may be recruited to pursue terrorism – as witnessed in Pakistan in 2005. For example, believed to be a senior member of Al-Shabaab, police accused Samantha Lewthwait, widow of London bomber Jermaine Lindsay, of masterminding a terrorist attack on a Kenyan shopping mall in Sep 2013 that led to the death of four British citizens.¹⁴⁴ Shortly before the fatal attack on soldier Lee Rigby, Michael Adebelajo, had previously sought to pursue jihad in Somalia. Kenyan police detained the young volunteer as he crossed the border and after minimal checks, returned him to the UK where he was free to continue involvement in the fundamentalist movement. In 2009, a 21-year-old Briton of Somali extraction, raised in west London, blew himself up in the Somali town of Baidoa, killing 20 people.¹⁴⁵ It appears that growing up in the west does not

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ K. Sengupta, ‘Exclusive: Army is fighting British jihadists in Afghanistan’, *The Independent Online*, 25th February 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/exclusive-army-is-fighting-british-jihadists-in-afghanistan-1631347.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁴⁴ A. Wishart, ‘The search for Samantha Lewthwaite’, *BBC News Online*, 2nd July 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28121340>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁴⁵ Sengupta ‘Exclusive: Army is fighting British jihadists in Afghanistan’

inhibit a person from carrying out the kind of suicide mission more typically associated with Palestinians living under direct occupation. As recently as 2014, a former community worker from Camden, North London, awaits trial in the US for alleged terrorism offences connected to *Al-Shabaab*. Prosecutors accuse the British Muslim of having ‘specific knowledge regarding Al-Qaeda members operating in East Africa who sought to carry out attacks against US and western interests’.¹⁴⁶

Afghanistan & Pakistan

Until the protests referred to as the *Arab Spring* began in 2010, the federally administered Tribal Areas (FATA) represented the number one destination for jihad. North Waziristan in particular, has hosted a number of training camps attended by British fundamentalist Muslims that have later gone on to pursue terrorism. However, a significant increase in the number of CIA drone strikes since 2007 has made it difficult for insurgents to operate in the region. Evidence presented to the special immigration appeals commission in 2002 showed that, ‘upwards of a thousand individuals from the UK are estimated on the basis of intelligence to have attended training camps in Afghanistan in the last five years, and that, the backgrounds of those detained show the high level of involvement of British citizens’.¹⁴⁷ In July 2005, Sir John Stevens, then Metropolitan police commissioner, claimed that approximately 3,000 British-born or British-based Muslims had attended training camps in Afghanistan over the past decade.¹⁴⁸

Since 2007, the US has significantly stepped up its surveillance inside Pakistan as part of a more aggressive policy concerning the war on terror. Increased counter terrorism activity has included a rise in the number of cross-border raids by unmanned Predator aircraft.¹⁴⁹ Intelligence gathered as part of these operations has produced considerable new evidence to indicate that British Muslims are training in FATA before joining the Taliban fighting against coalition forces. Acknowledging the

¹⁴⁶ M. Evans and D.Brown, ‘British jihadist suspects of making chemical weapons for al-Shabaab’, *The Australian Online*, 5th October 2013, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/british-jihadist-suspects-of-making-chemical-weapons-for-al-shabaab/story-fnb64oi6-1226733422055#sthash.denYcrYp.dpuf>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁴⁷ Simcox ‘Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections’

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Sengupta ‘Exclusive: Army is fighting British jihadists in Afghanistan’

flow of volunteers from the UK to Afghanistan, Chairperson of the commons sub-committee on counter-terrorism, MP Patrick Mercer has told Parliament, 'we know the problem we have with UK-based jihadists. We also know that a number of them have been arrested trying to leave the country. With the UK intelligence services at full stretch, it is not surprising some of these jihadists had ended up in Afghanistan.'¹⁵⁰ Former commander of British Forces, Brigadier Ed Butler, offers further evidence to support that proposition that British Muslims have and continue to fight on the front line in Afghanistan against coalition forces. In 2008, he told reporters, 'There are British passport holders who live in the UK who are being found in places like Kandahar.'¹⁵¹ The same article notes how British spy planes monitoring radio transmissions had picked up discussions between operators speaking with broad regional accents common to the areas of Birmingham and Bradford. As well as posing a threat to the UK, the recruitment of British Muslims for jihad threatens the security of the US. As UK passport holders, these fundamentalists are able to travel to the US with relative ease in order to pursue terrorism. Before his conviction and subsequent life sentence for terrorist offences in the UK, Dhiren Barot, carried out detailed surveillance in New York on behalf of Al-Qaeda.

Syria

In January 2011, protestors calling for the overthrow of President Assad faced overwhelming police and military retaliation. Gradually the state descended into civil war providing space and opportunity for the rise of Islamic militants determined to establish a Caliphate. In pursuing this highly significant and popular objective through acts of truly barbaric violence, the group commonly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), have attracted fundamentalists from all around the world. So successful, by mid 2014, Syria had outpaced Afghanistan and become the number one destination for British Muslims determined to fight jihad. Media reports in May 2014 suggested that security services were closely monitoring British Muslims fighting

¹⁵⁰ J. Ingham, 'British Muslims are killing our troops', *Express Online*, 26th February 2009, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/86485/British-Muslims-are-killing-our-troops>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁵¹ D. Gardham, 'British Muslims fighting with Taliban in Afghanistan', *The Telegraph Online*, 1st August 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/2485750/British-Muslims-fighting-with-Taliban-in-Afghanistan.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

with ISIS due to concerns they may return to the UK and pursue terrorism. MI5 have said that “blowback” from Syria represents one of the main threats to British security.¹⁵² Specifically, officers are concerned that British Muslims fighting in the country may return to the UK battle-hardened and indoctrinated, ready to attack the British way of life and punish politicians for decades of interference in Muslim countries. In April 2014, the British Government released its annual report discussing the progress made in respect of its counter terrorism strategy known as CONTEST.¹⁵³ In particular, the report highlights concerns over the threat posed by foreign fighters. Officials state that 33-50% of security service workload now focuses on British Muslims fighting with ISIS in Syria.¹⁵⁴

In respect of ISIS, Charles Cooper, researcher at the anti-extremist think tank, Quilliam Foundation, has suggested the group offer a genuine prospect of establishing an Islamic Caliphate, which presents an attractive proposition for British fundamentalists volunteering to travel there in pursuit of jihad.

ISIS are the only group in the world that has come close to establishing its version of an Islamic state, which is a big thing for people - including the British - who feel drawn to this kind of Islamic extremism. People who are starting to go out to Syria from Britain will see the huge gains that ISIS has made in Iraq in the last few days and they will be keen to join them because they see the potential.¹⁵⁵

Academic researcher Shiraz Maher with Kings College London has said that Syria now dominates global jihad, to the envy of insurgent groups in both Somalia and

¹⁵² M. Burleigh, ‘The ancient Muslim hatreds tearing apart the Middle East’, *Daily Mail Online*, 13th June 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2656734/Ancient-hatreds-tearing-apart-Middle-East-How-1-400-year-old-feud-Shia-Sunni-Muslims-flared-life-fall-dictators-like-Gaddafi-Saddam-threatens-swallow-Iraq.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁵³ Home Office, ‘Project CONTEST: The Government’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy’, *UK Parliament*, September 2009, <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm77/7703/7703.pdf>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

¹⁵⁴ Pantucci ‘The British Foreign Fighter Contingent in Syria’

¹⁵⁵ H. Arkell, ‘British fanatics heading to Iraq to join ISIS militants in their Hundreds amid fears they could bring terror to UK’, *Daily Mail Online*, 13th June 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2656977/Britons-heading-Iraq-join-ISIS-militants-HUNDREDS-amid-fears-bring-terror-UK.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

Yemen. Maher notes, 'One of the interesting things we've seen is that other jihadist groups, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and (al-Shabab) in Somalia have issued a communiqué saying, 'Listen, don't forget about us, we also need foreign fighters, don't all go to Syria'.¹⁵⁶

Discussing the flood of British Muslims to Syria, Research Fellow at the Henry Jackson Society Robin Simcox, discusses the various motivations that have led to the rise in volunteers and the threat posed to Britain in terms of future terrorism:

The war in Syria will continue to attract Brits. Some will travel because they sympathise with al-Qaeda's ideology, others because they genuinely wish to alleviate Muslim suffering and who do not intend to join up with al-Qaeda or ISIL. Unfortunately, the radicalising effect of conflict means this could sometimes be the outcome anyway.¹⁵⁷

Rejecting the implication from Simcox that British jihadists fighting in Syria constitute altruistic revolutionaries motivated by the desire to save co-religionists from oppression, Dr Usama Hasan, senior researcher in Islamic Studies at the Quilliam Foundation, remarks:

There is no question that British jihadists continue to further destabilise the Syrian Civil War. Moreover, in the last year, we have seen Britons becoming suicide bombers in Syria, allegedly perpetrating war crimes and, according to intelligence reports, posing an active threat to UK national security....We would do well not to propagate the myth that these men are freedom fighters or that they should be compared to Britons who fought in the Spanish Civil War.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ J. Cuffe, 'Who are the British jihadists in Syria?', *BBC News Online*, 15th October 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24520762>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁵⁷ R. Simcox, 'Why British boys are fighting in Syria's war', *Al-Jazeera Online*, 12th May 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/05/why-british-boys-are-fighting-s-201458103336479836.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁵⁸ U. Hasan, 'Syria conflict: British jihadists are nothing like the freedom fighters of the Spanish Civil War', *Telegraph Online*, 21st May 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10846275/Syria-conflict-British-jihadists-are-nothing-like-the-freedom-fighters-of-the-Spanish-Civil-War.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

In response to the increasing number of British Muslims volunteering to fight in Syria, Deputy assistant commissioner Helen Ball, senior national coordinator for counter terrorism policing has said:

We want to ensure that people, particularly women, who are concerned about their loved ones are given enough information about what they can do to prevent this from happening. We want to increase their confidence in the police and partners to encourage them to come forward so that we can intervene and help. This is not about criminalising people. It is about preventing tragedies.¹⁵⁹

Ball appears naïve over the role of women in traditional Muslim communities from which volunteers are originating. Mothers are rarely aware of what young people were doing and even if they did, traditional Islamic values and historical mistrust of the police make it difficult if not impossible for them to inform the authorities. Consequently, young Muslims both male and female continue to flock to Turkey before crossing the border in order to help establish and maintain the Islamic State currently spanning the northern regions of Iraq and Syria.

Financing and equipping the mujahedeen

Between 2001 & 2008, UK courts convicted roughly ten British Muslims of fundraising for terrorist purposes.¹⁶⁰ Two of these convictions occurred in 2001, after which there would be no more until the London bombings in 2005. It would appear that during this four-year interval, fundraising had become a low priority for the security services. In actual fact, ministers invested a great deal of resources into disrupting this activity and although only ten individuals were found guilty, police charged a total of thirty-four fundamentalists in relation to channelling funds and equipment to the Taliban. The low conviction rate of 29% may be attributed to the

¹⁵⁹ V. Dodd and S. Laville, 'Syria crisis: stop your sons joining war, urges Met police', *The Guardian Online*, 24th April 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/apr/23/sons-war-syria-metropolitan-police>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁶⁰ Home Office, 'Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes in Great Britain', 13th May 2009, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110220105210/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb0409.pdf>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

complexity of proving a defendant had knowingly given money to a terrorist group thousands of miles away in Afghanistan.

From studying political ideology, it is apparent that fundamentalists were strongly encouraged to send finance and equipment to overseas mujahedeen. Evidence suggests that fundraising occurred in a variety of different ways including the trade of fundamentalist multimedia, collection tins at the mosque, fraud, philanthropy, and lastly the misappropriation of charitable donations from within the Muslim community.¹⁶¹ Pantucci has said that foreign mujahedeen consider Muslims in the UK to be more valuable as fundraisers than combative jihadists.¹⁶² Terrorist involved in the 2003 fertilizer plot had been strongly encouraged by their contact in Afghanistan to return to the UK and raise funds. Specifically he told them that his group had more than sufficient number of fighters and that if they wanted to help the cause, they should send finance and equipment.¹⁶³

Former home secretary David Blunkett has said that fundraising in the UK for overseas Islamic insurgency occurred extensively during his time in office.¹⁶⁴ Consequently, money laundering became a significant focus within counter terrorism strategy. Policy makers introduced prominent checks within both the formal banking system and informal currency exchange bureaus in an effort to stem the flow of finance from the UK to Pakistan in particular. In contrast to the IRA who ran sophisticated frauds equivalent to the Mafia, fundraising by members of the fundamentalist movement occurred at a far lower level, fragmented and disorganised. Blunkett admits that it was simply not possible to know the full scale of fundraising carried out by British Muslims. In part, this may be due to the informal, trust-based mechanism of transferring money between countries known as *Hawala*. Common in the Middle East, Hawala transactions occur by telephone with no electronic audit trail that government agencies can detect, monitor or trace thereby making it difficult for counter terrorism officers to disrupt the activity.

¹⁶¹ Nasiri *Inside the Jihad* p.291

¹⁶² Pantucci *Author Interview*

¹⁶³ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007] EWCA Crim 1612. p.5769

¹⁶⁴ Author interview with David Blunkett, London, 9th October 2013

British Muslims have physically transported cash directly to fighters. In 2013, student, Nawal Msaad, appeared in court accused of attempting to smuggle £16,000 in her underwear to insurgents fighting in Syria.¹⁶⁵ Along with her co-accused Amal Elwahabi, the two young Muslim girls became the first British women charged with terrorism offences in relation to the Syrian conflict. Provocative, un-Islamic photographs of Msaad discovered on social media website Facebook, strongly implied that she was not a fundamentalist Muslim. Therefore, she did not fit the profile of someone who would engage in fundraising for terrorist purposes. Unsurprisingly, a jury cleared her of the charges but convicted her friend whom she had accused of tricking her into carrying the money.¹⁶⁶ During the trial, Msaad told the court she had been 'stitched up' by her friend Elwahabi, who had offered the naïve young girl £790 to take the 20,000 euros to Turkey.¹⁶⁷

Collections at Mosques

Throughout the 1990s, mosques in the Muslim communities of Birmingham, East London and Bradford administered collection tins for foreign mujahedeen. Although the practice was not obvious to outside visitors, it was common knowledge that these funds would be sent to places like Kashmir and Afghanistan to aid insurgencies.¹⁶⁸ Until a clampdown by the British Government in 2000, significant amounts of finance and equipment from the UK found its way to mujahedeen fighters in almost every Islamic Insurgency around the globe. Substantial attempts to stop this activity resulted in a number of individuals and charities in the UK having their bank accounts seized.¹⁶⁹ Despite extensive campaigns to halt British support for Islamic

¹⁶⁵ T. Thornhill, 'The British female terror groupies queuing up to marry jihad fighters in Syria', *Daily Mail Online*, 17th February 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2561247/jihad-hold-How-British-terror-groupies-heading-Syria-wed-fighters.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁶⁶ M. Duell, 'Cleared, the 'jihottie' accused of funding terror by smuggling cash in her underwear', *Daily Mail Online*, 13th August 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2723917/Young-woman-tried-smuggle-20-000-euros-knickers-flight-Turkey-CLEARED-funding-jihadists-Syria.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Counter Terrorism Officer, *Author interview*

¹⁶⁹ Freedom of Information Request made to the Charity Commission by the author in June 2013. Copy available on request to lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

insurgencies, the practice continues unabated. Primarily this is because even Islamic Moderates recognise the duty of every Muslim to financially support those undertaking legitimate jihad. There are clear parallels between British Fundamentalists responsible for the task of fundraising and the Irish-American diaspora known to have raised funds and enabled the supply of arms and equipment to mainly the Provisional IRA during *The Troubles*.¹⁷⁰ Asked whether individuals in Muslim communities have previously collected money for overseas insurgents Osbourne has said:

Definitely for Kashmir, no doubt about it for Kashmir, but ironically the militants in Kashmir were never particularly short of money given that they had plenty of government money behind them usually, but with the Afghan situation they tended to collect for Afghan refugees and I think it remains an open question whether people genuinely believed it was going to Afghan refugees or did know that it was going towards militants in that area.¹⁷¹

In fairness to the Muslim community for whom charity is a pillar of Islam, not everyone may have believed money they were donating was going directly to jihadists. Osbourne adds to his account of the process:

I mean before you tar a whole community with fundraising for terrorism you have to understand the obligation to help out poor people and refugees within Islam. That's what they would give money for and it would be Syria now, and it has been other causes over the years and there is some collecting but not a large amount of collecting for poor people in this country. So it does tend to be foreign causes and it is quite often shaking tins and people will look at the individual shaking the tin and think how much do I trust you and should I put my money somewhere else.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ For an illuminating article on this subject which draws parallels between the two causes see: S. Shane, 'For Lawmaker Examining Terror, a Pro-I.R.A. Past', *The New York Times online*, 8th March 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/09/us/politics/09king.html?_r=0, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁷¹ Osbourne *Author Interview*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Asked whether there were members of the Muslim community who knowingly funded foreign fighters and if so why, journalist Amardeep Bassey adds to the account given by Osbourne stating:

I think you will still find the case that the majority, and I am sticking my neck out here, the majority of Muslims in this country believe that the west is against Islam and there is this us against them thing about it. So if I am giving money to this guy and it might end up in the hands of terrorists, I did not give it to terrorists, if it ends up in their hands then fair play, the British have been fucking us for years. To put in no uncertain terms, and I think you will find in their unguarded moments nearly every second generation British Asian feels that.¹⁷³

There is a case to be made that members of the British Muslim community were at worst complicit in fundraising and at best complacent in the possibility that money donated might end up being used to buy weapons for the Taliban at a time when they were engaged in an insurgency against British and American forces in Afghanistan.

Fraud

Since 2001, British fundamentalists have committed credit card, mortgage and personal loan fraud in order to raise much needed finance for overseas insurgents. Between February and March 2004, the leaders of two major UK terrorist plots Omar Khyam and Mohammed Sidique Khan met on four separate occasions.¹⁷⁴ According to police, the only subjects these two men discussed were how to defraud banks, building societies and trade merchants. Evidence from court transcripts suggests they did this for three reasons. Initially to support insurgents in Afghanistan, then to finance military training in Pakistan and later on to fund terrorism plots in the UK.¹⁷⁵

Investigators have concluded that the July 7th London bombers raised the estimated £8,000 cost of their jihad and Terrorist operations through a series of

¹⁷³ Author interview with Amardeep Bassey, Birmingham, 17th July 2013

¹⁷⁴ Staff Reporter, Pressure Grows for 7/7 Inquiry', *BBC News Online*, 1st May 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6610209.stm, (accessed at 11th November 2014)

¹⁷⁵ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007] (see note 21 above), p. 2145

fraudulent activities, in particular the men applied for bank loans they no intention of repaying.¹⁷⁶ In addition, Mohammed Sidique Khan defaulted on personal loan repayments, and his personal bank account had become significantly overdrawn by the time of the attack. Fellow bomber Jermaine Lindsay made a number of purchases with bank cheques that subsequently bounced in the weeks before July 7th 2005.¹⁷⁷ According to the official government report into the London bombings, there is no evidence the cell obtained any external sources of income from Al-Qaeda or other fundamentalists in the UK.¹⁷⁸ On the contrary, conspirators were established fundraisers with a history of sending finance and equipment to mujahedeen fighters in Afghanistan. Through this association with members of the Taliban, the future terrorists proved their commitment to the cause thereby helping to facilitate access to training camps in 2003 and 2004 respectively.

Evidence of fundraising for overseas mujahedeen goes back to at least 2001. The *Telegraph* newspaper reported at the time that “Islamic Extremists” with links to Osama bin Laden had raised hundreds of thousands of pounds by defrauding taxpayers in a string of sophisticated benefit swindles across the UK.¹⁷⁹ Police traced some of the money to known Al-Qaeda bank accounts used to finance jihadist conflicts all around the world, including Afghanistan and Kashmir. Proving a link between fundamentalists in the UK and overseas insurgents, Police discovered the source of the benefit fraud to members of the fundamentalist group *Supporters of Shariah* (SoS). This organization had been operating, undetected for more than five years. Founded by Abu Hamza Al-Masri, SoS ran predominantly through Finsbury Park Mosque in north London and maintained links to a second high profile fundamentalist group in the city known as Al-Mujiharoon.¹⁸⁰

Private philanthropy

¹⁷⁶ HM Government, ‘Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005’

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ D. Froggo and S. Trump, ‘Benefit fraud ring funds Islamic terrorists’, *Telegraph Online*, 18th November 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1362690/Benefit-fraud-ring-funds-Islamic-terrorists.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

In 2010, former teaching assistant Shabaaz Hussain pleaded guilty to seven counts of fundraising for terrorism purposes.¹⁸¹ In total, he personally donated £9,114 to three friends who had left the UK to pursue jihad in Somalia. Police searching his home uncovered a hoard of fundamentalist literature including 26 speeches by fundamentalist preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri. This proscribed material included sermons by Al-Masri in which he preached the obligation of Muslims to wage jihad and financial support those who do. In a second case, between August 2008 and October 2012, brothers Shabir and Mohammed Ali regularly sent money to a third brother also pursuing jihad in Somalia.¹⁸² These two British born and raised Islamic fundamentalists were in regular contact with Shamim Ali and admitting in court of being fully aware of his activities. Although prosecutors accept they sent funds primarily out of concern for their brother's physical and mental health, this did little to reduce the gravity of their offences. Without financial support from individuals in the west, insurgents in countries like Somalia would not be able to purchase the weapons and equipment that fuels civil war raging all over the country. Before, and to a lesser extent, after the introduction of the terrorism act 2000 individual British Muslims sympathetic to the global *Islamic fundamentalist movement* have regularly donated a portion of their income to overseas insurgents.

Misappropriation of charitable donations

To what extent have charities in the UK served as a vehicle for transporting finance and equipment to various Islamic insurgent groups around the world? In 2014, aid convoys were at the centre of a counter terrorism investigation over fears they supported Al-Qaeda militants in Syria.¹⁸³ According to an article in the *Daily Mail*, authorities seized tens of thousands of pounds in cash from relief vehicles travelling

¹⁸¹ Staff Reporter, 'Shabaaz Hussain: Somalia terrorism funder jailed', *BBC News Online*, 9th March 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-17310858>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁸² R -v- Mohammed Ali and Mohyammed Ali, Central Criminal Court, 1st August 2012, <http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/judgments/mohammed-ali-mohyammed-ali-sentencing-remarks-01082012/>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁸³ G. Greenwood, 'Are Syria charities a front for Jihadists? Fears convoys in the country are being used to help militants after thousands in cash is seized', *Daily Mail Online*, 14th February 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2559042/Are-Syria-charities-Jihadists-Fears-convoys-country-used-help-militants-thousands-cash-seized.html#ixzz3Imep2QIO>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

from Britain to the war-torn state. Journalists report that an investigation by Kent police led to the confiscation of £40,000 from one particular aid convoy at the port of Dover in December 2012. British Security Services expressed concern that radical Islamists determined to support networks of violent jihadists had hijacked this huge relief effort. Stuart Osbourne has said charitable organisations are responsible for a great deal of the funding going to jihadists.

A lot of small charities were set up in the early 2000's that were able to divert that money, not a lot a handful, and again around Syria there are a handful of small charities and again we don't know where the money is going in that regard. But again as with Afghanistan there are huge numbers of Syrian refugees who need the money and there were huge numbers of Afghan refugees across the borders in chaman and elsewhere who needed that money.¹⁸⁴

Gardham suggests that recent terrorism cases have shown how charity fundraising can be a useful means of raising finance quickly, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan.¹⁸⁵ Discussing the subject in 2013, Gardham was referring to the case of three men from Birmingham who prosecutors allege were engaged in a terrorism plot designed to rival the July 7th London bombings. Evidence presented as court showed all three defendants had made bogus charity collections for Muslim Aid as well as a local Muslim centre.¹⁸⁶ In fact, the two causes received only a fraction of the money they had collected. Prosecutors claimed the defendants used the rest for planning their terrorist attack. Representing the crown, barrister Brian Altman told the jury that the men were 'despicably stealing money from their own community donated to charity'.¹⁸⁷ Gardham has said that in his experience, there was a degree of reluctance from some fundamentalists to money intended for refugees, to fighters serving on the front line. Notwithstanding this however, he accepts that within Muslim communities

¹⁸⁴ Osbourne *Author Interview*

¹⁸⁵ Gardham *Author Interview*

¹⁸⁶ Staff Reporter, 'Terrorism trial: three accused of planning attacks greater than 7/7', *The Guardian Online*, 22nd October 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/oct/22/terrorism-trial-three-accused-attacks>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁸⁷ Authors private notes taken from attendance at the trial of Irfan Nasser et al between Jan and March 2013 held at Woolwich Crown Court, London

there were people who absolutely wanted to donate money to the mujahedeen. Boyed by the events of 9/11, Gardham contends that after this victory for Al-Qaeda, the amount of donations from the UK Muslim community to foreign fighters significantly increased.¹⁸⁸

Discussing methods of fundraising for jihad, David Blunkett acknowledges “charitable scams” went on within the Asian and Arabic community because people were genuinely keen to give to causes they believed were right.¹⁸⁹ Those of means and goodwill were likely to respond positively when asked to give in terms of rebuilding a school after an earthquake or housing or welfare of children somewhere on the border country between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Like the *Hawala* method of transferring money, it was equally difficult to track funds purportedly destined for humanitarian relief. Blunkett accepts it took the government sometime to get up to speed on all of it. Success appears to be limited. However, in 2008, the charity commission banned notorious fundraiser and facilitator Mohammed Al-Ghabra from being involved in charitable organisations in the UK. Police alleged that he misappropriated donations, using them to facilitate British Muslims going to Pakistan for military training.¹⁹⁰

Chairperson of the UK Charity Commission William Shawcross has said that Islamic extremism currently presents the “most deadly” threat to British Charities. ‘The problem of Islamist extremism and charities ... Is not the most widespread problem we face in terms of abuse of charities, but is potentially the most deadly. And it is, alas, growing’.¹⁹¹ Shawcross told the Sunday times that the regulator is taking action against charities sending money to various groups in Syria. He has asked Prime Minister, David Cameron, to introduce changes to charity law, including disallowing those with terrorism convictions to set up charities. In 2014, the charity commission investigated two organisations following allegations of complicity in the raising of

¹⁸⁸ Gardham *Author Interview*

¹⁸⁹ Blunkett *Author interview*

¹⁹⁰ N. Sommerlad, ‘More trustees ousted from Al Ikhlas Foundation’, *The Mirror Online*, 15th April 2010, <http://blogs.mirror.co.uk/investigations/2010/04/more-trustees-ousted-from-al-i.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

¹⁹¹ Staff Reporter, ‘UK charity watchdog warns of growing Islamic extremism threat’, *Business Standard*, 20th April 2014, http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/uk-charity-watchdog-warns-of-growing-islamic-extremism-threat-114042000432_1.html, (accessed 11th November 2014)

funds for terrorist groups in Syria.¹⁹² Since 2013, Police have arrested and charged a number of British citizens on suspicion involvement in alleged charity fraud in which police believe money donated to help victims of the Syrian conflict, has in fact found its way to Islamic insurgents.

¹⁹² A. Holt, 'Charity Commission opens investigation into two charities set up to deliver aid to Syria', *Charity Times*, 30th January, 2014, http://www.charitytimes.com/ct/Charity_Commission%20_opens%20_investigation_charities_deliver_aid_to%20_Syria.php, (accessed 11th November 2014)

Chapter Five - Terrorism born of Islamic Fundamentalism

The previous chapters of this dissertation have looked in detail at the rise and inner workings of the *Islamic fundamentalist movement* (fundamentalist movement). Chapter one identified fundamentalism as a concept distinct from moderate Islam, chapter two outlined how fundamentalist British Muslims organised themselves into a socio-political movement, chapter three examined in detail the politics of this movement while chapter four presented a study of activities pursued by followers. Throughout the dissertation, the central thesis has argued that domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims since 2003, has been a direct consequence of the incubation like nature of the fundamentalist movement. Absent of this environment, neither the mindset nor the operational support necessary for the genesis of “Islamic” terrorism could have materialised.

In this fifth and final substantive chapter, we present evidence in direct support of the core thesis. Specifically, we explore the pursuit of terrorism by British Muslims who to varying degrees have engaged in the *Islamic Fundamentalist Movement* since it first emerged in London during the late 1990s. In particular, the chapter concentrates on the subset of fundamentalists who crossed the line and conspired to kill fellow citizens. Primarily our interest in this chapter lies in understanding and thereby seeking to explain what differentiates a minority of British Muslims who accept and act upon the legitimacy of terrorism, from the majority of those who do not. We begin our investigation by presenting ten case studies in support of the core thesis. Amongst others, examples include the 2003/2004 fertilizer plot, the two 2005 London plots and most significantly the 2007 transatlantic airline conspiracy. The latter example led to the introduction of restrictions concerning the amount of liquid that passengers could take in their hand luggage. A more recent case study discussed in this chapter concerns two fundamentalist Muslims responsible for the murder of Soldier Lee Rigby. In light of his death, it quickly emerged that killer Michael Adebolajo had been a long-term fundamentalist Muslim, regularly attending events hosted by extremist preachers. In the aftermath of the attack, photographs

quickly emerged of Adebolajo attending demonstrations organised by leading and outspoken protagonist of Islamic fundamentalism Anjem Choudary.¹

Published in 2013, an empirical study by a UK think tank, linked both active and former members of the fundamentalist movement to almost every major UK terrorism plot, discovered or executed between 2003 and 2013.² Notwithstanding the arguably erroneous conflation of jihad and terrorism, this report based on research conducted by *Hope not Hate*, demonstrates that involvement with Islamic fundamentalism, contributes towards incubating an extremist mindset – the type necessary to legitimize and encourage violence against non-combatants. Over the last twenty years since approximately 1995, several hundred British Muslims have engaged with the fundamentalist movement. While the majority carried out activities promoted by the movement, only a small percentage conspired to commit acts of terrorism in the UK. On the surface, all members appear outwardly similar and yet there is clearly something unique about those willing to give up their lives to further a political cause. This chapter therefore moves forward by profiling as far as possible, individuals who shift from mere fundamentalist to extremist terrorist.

Critically, the first section of this chapter attempts to connect individuals that have engaged in terrorism, with prior involvement in the fundamentalist movement. Evidence suggests that by adopting extreme political narratives, British Muslims with a history of fundamentalist activity, later go on to pursue terrorism. Drawing upon case studies presented in section one, section two then seeks to construct a standard profile of these individuals based upon several factors including education, family life, emotional wellbeing as well as political interests. The third section of this chapter considers their underlying motivation. Specifically, it considers the core thesis questions: What motivates British Muslims to give up their lives and in some cases parental responsibilities, in order to kill or seriously injure fellow citizens? How might we account for the minority of fundamentalists seemingly pushed over the edge to pursue terrorism? In many cases, third parties manipulate individuals to “volunteer”

¹ A. Martin, ‘These filthy unbelievers are pigs’: Woolwich terror suspect's rant at rally to incite youngsters’, *Daily Mail Online*, 30th May 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2333039/Woolwich-terror-suspect-Michael-Adebolajos-rant-rally-incite-youngsters.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

² Hope Not Hate, ‘The Al-Muhajiroun Network’, undated, <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/hate-groups/am/>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

for suicide bombing as opposed to any kind of self-discovery leading to an organic independent, unbiased decision to join in with a terrorist conspiracy.

Building on the extensive analysis of individual terrorists, the penultimate section of this chapter examines how terrorists work together within a single operational cell. In particular, to what extent do conspirators receive support from other fundamentalists both domestically and internationally? Between 2003 and 2006, Al-Qaeda operatives predominantly based in Pakistan and Afghanistan played a critical role in training British terrorist cells and directing their operations. Since 2007 however, while the domestic element of the fundamentalist has remained important, access and support from the global movement in Pakistan appears to have significantly declined. In concluding the chapter, the final section examines the response of the British Government to the rise and impact of the fundamentalist movement in terms of its role as an incubator of extremist terrorism. Initial failure to recognise the importance of the movement back in the 1990s allowed membership to grow exponentially. Despite a limited clampdown after the London bombings, this grassroots organisation of fundamentalist Muslims remains strong. In 2013, however, Prime Minister David Cameron finally acknowledged fundamentalism to be at the heart of the terrorist threat in the UK.³ He immediately pledged a new task force would be set up to do everything it could to find new ways to disrupt and disable the fundamentalist movement without compromising on the tradition of civil and human rights afforded to all UK citizens regardless of religion.

Terrorism carried out by extreme fundamentalists

This section presents several case studies demonstrating the relationship between the Islamic fundamentalist movement and extremist terrorism carried out domestically by British Muslims since 2003. Long before any kind of formal recruitment or association, fundamentalists immerse themselves in the kind of *extreme political narratives* outlined in chapter three. As a consequence of years spent socialising within circles that encourage anti-western sentiment, members become highly sensitive to acts of aggression that appear to reinforce messages promoted by

³ R. Brant, 'Extremism taskforce to be set up after Woolwich', *BBC News Online*, 25th May 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22670184>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

fundamentalist preachers. Iraq offers in an important case study in this respect. Enforcing sanctions during the 1990s and then invading the country in 2003 supported the proposition made by preachers that the west is directly at war with Islam. Due to the anarchic nature of international relations and the absence of an overarching leviathan, inevitably states will act in their own best interests. Regrettably, this often leads them to commit acts of violence against the Muslim nation that invariably serves to legitimize and give weight to the response proscribed by fundamentalist preachers, namely the pursuit of jihad and to a lesser extent, terrorism.

Over the last ten years, associates of Al-Qaeda deemed a minority of British Muslims who sought to pursue jihad in Afghanistan as unsuitable for combat. Still determined to “serve the cause” however, these men either returned voluntarily or were sent home to the UK with the intention to become suicide bombers. This dissertation argues that involvement in the fundamentalist movement incubates a mindset that leads a minority to believe that terrorism is both legitimate and necessary in order to help re-establish an Islamic Caliphate. In support of this proposition, the dissertation asks to what extent can the pursuit of terrorism, be connected to the fundamentalist movement, specifically its political ideology. Although we cannot say definitively that one has followed the other, there is clearly an alignment between the messages promoted within the movement and what terrorists commonly cite as their overall motivation. In every case study presented in this chapter, police have recovered video and audiotapes of sermons delivered by fundamentalist preachers at the homes of those who have pursued violent terrorism. Furthermore, as this section will show, conspirators routinely attended events held by preachers and in many cases, undertook non-violent fundamentalist activities that brought them into contact with actors who would later assist them.

At least twenty per cent of British Muslims convicted of terrorism offences in the UK had previous links with the Islamic fundamentalist group Al-Muhajiroun (ALM).⁴ Outlawed in January 2010, critics linked this Salafi-Wahabi organisation founded by Syrian born Omar Bakri Mohammed to international terrorism,

⁴ T. Whitehead, ‘Woolwich attack: Al Muhajiroun linked to one in five terrorist convictions’, *Telegraph Online*, 24th May 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10079827/Woolwich-attack-Al-Muhajiroun-linked-to-one-in-five-terrorist-convictions.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

homophobia and anti-Semitism.⁵ From the mid-1990s, ALM were one of two prominent groups in which members of the overall fundamentalist movement organised themselves in order to promote the political ideology detailed in chapter three. Days after the killing of soldier Lee Rigby in May 2013, journalists uncovered evidence suggesting the main suspect, Michael Adebolajo, had been deeply involved with ALM since 2004. Videos and photographs of him attending public demonstrations quickly appeared in the media and on social networking web sites. With his hands soaked in blood, Adebolajo told stunned observers ‘the only reason we have killed this man today is because Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers...it’s an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’.⁶ This rhetoric appears drawn from the political narrative promoted by the fundamentalist movement in which the west are accused of being at war with Islam. Building on this example, the section now moves forward by presenting ten important cases in support of the thesis that involvement with the fundamentalist movement incubates the necessary mindset and provides the required introductions necessary to pursue terrorism.

2001 - The Shoe Bombers

Shortly after the 2001 terrorist attack in New York, Al-Qaeda recruited two London based Islamic fundamentalists to undertake a follow up operation. Born and raised in the UK, Saajid Badat and Richard Reid volunteered to detonate explosives hidden in their shoes while aboard transatlantic flights from Europe to the United States. Fortunately for the passengers of American Airlines flight 63, degradation of the explosive material prevented it from detonating. Unlike Reid, Badat decided he was not ready for martyrdom and phoned his handler to say that *Van Damn* (Reid) would have to go it alone. Although both men were active in the fundamentalist movement for at least a year before their operation, they first met while jointly attending an Al-

⁵ N. Ahmed, ‘UK pays price for MI5 courting terror’, *Asia Times Online*, 30th May 2013, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/World/WOR-01-300513.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁶ A. Bond, ‘Video: Gruesome footage showed a blood-stained Michael Adebolajo shortly after butchering Lee Rigby’, *Mirror Online*, 19th December 2013, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/lee-rigby-murder-trial-gruesome-2943281>, (accessed 28th October 2014)

Qaeda training camp in the Khalden region of Afghanistan.⁷ During his engagement with the fundamentalist movement in Tooting, South West London, Badat came under the influence of established jihadist and training facilitator Babar Ahmed.⁸ In 2014, Ahmed pleaded guilty in the United States to charges of recruiting men like Badat and helping them to pursue Jihad in Afghanistan.⁹ Since Badat failed to cross the line from fundamentalist to extreme fundamentalist terrorist, he provides a textbook case study in support of the argument that jihad and terrorism are not necessarily synonymous. While prosecutors rightly identified Reid as a terrorist – an individual willing to kill innocent civilians, Badat was nothing more than an idealistic jihadist, an individual evidently incapable of crossing the line. Environment is important for generating a pool of potential terrorists but only those who have adopted an extremist political ideology (detailed in chapter 3) and previously engaged in activities designed to support the re-establishment of a Caliphate, hold the mindset necessary to target innocent civilians. In contrast with Reid, Badat did not have a close association with Abu Hamza Al-Masri – a preacher known to argue for the legitimacy of suicide bombing. Furthermore, Badat was not involved in raising funds for foreign mujahedeen and he believed Jihad was only permissible against an occupying force. While initially going along with the plot during his time in Afghanistan, withdrawn from the fundamentalist environment, Badat reverted to his beliefs that targeting civilians and committing suicide were not permissible in Islam.

Following a similar path to Badat, the journey to Afghanistan for Reid, began with his gradual radicalisation at a mosque in Brixton, South London. Rapidly ascending the Islamic fundamentalist movement, Reid eventually sought out like-minded individuals by attending lectures and sermons given at Finsbury Park Mosque by Abu Hamza Al-Masri. Until around 2003, both Brixton and Finsbury Park have been at the centre of allegations concerning the radicalisation of British Muslims. Fundamentalists from around the country travelled hundreds of miles (e.g. from Yorkshire) in order to hear certain preachers speak and to network with other

⁷ L. Trevelyan, 'Shoe-bomber super grass Saajid Badat testifies in US', *BBC News Online*, 24th April 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-17820810>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ D. Casciani, 'Extradited Briton Babar Ahmad admits terrorism offences', *BBC News Online*, 10th December 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25322782>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

members. When giving evidence at his trial in New York, Reid clearly demonstrated how the political narratives of the fundamentalist movement had influenced his thinking about the world politics and almost certainly led him to volunteer for terrorism. In particular, he told the court, 'With regards to what you said about killing innocent people, I will say one thing. Your government has killed 2 million children in Iraq. If you want to think about something, against 2 million, I don't see a comparison'.¹⁰ Given the 2002 trial took place before the US led invasion of Iraq, Reid appears to have been referring to the decade long sanctions enforced by NATO. Fundamentalist political ideology argues these sanctions starved the civilian population of vital resources leading to the deaths of millions of innocent Muslim men, women and children.

2003 - Suicide Bombing in Tel Aviv

Demonstrating the link between fundamentalism and terrorism, two British Muslims volunteered to carry out a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv in April 2003. Aged 22 and 27 respectively, Asif Hanif from London and Omar Sharif from Derby were both active members of the fundamentalist movement for several years before travelling to Israel. Just two weeks before leaving for Israel, police observed Omar Khan Sharif on the streets of Derby distributing leaflets for the fundamentalist group Al-Muhajiroun.¹¹ While searching the men's homes, Police discovered literature associated with Hizb ut-Tahrir (HUT). Following a similar ideology to other fundamentalist groups albeit absent of any encouragement to pursue Jihad, the UK division of HUT was founded by Omar Bakri Mohammed.¹² In 1996, Bakri left the organisation to set up ALM taking several more hard-line followers with him. Of particular relevance in the case of Omar Sharif, is that his wife had noted down Bakri's mobile telephone number during a lecture concerning the legitimacy of suicide bombing.¹³ Although Sharif had

¹⁰ Staff Reporter, 'Reid: 'I am at war with your country'', *CNN Online*, 31st January 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/LAW/01/31/reid.transcript/>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹¹ Hope Not Hate 'The Al-Muhajiroun Network'

¹² Hope Not Hate, 'Hizb ut-Tahrir', undated, <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/hate-groups/ht>, (accessed 27th October 2014)

¹³ S. O'Neill, 'Bomber's wife is linked to radicals', *The Times Online*, 29th April 2004, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,173-1091516,00.html>, (12th November 2014)

been associated with Bakri and other fundamentalist Muslims in the UK, it has not been established who put the two men in touch with Hamas, the Palestinian insurgent group who sponsored the operation by providing both men with the necessary explosive vests.

There is circumstantial evidence that members of an Islamic fundamentalist group in Birmingham facilitated Hanif and Sharif. Around the time of the attack, leaflets published in Birmingham by the group *al-Sunnah*, encouraged Muslims to volunteer for Suicide bombing.¹⁴ After Police discovered copies of the leaflet in the West Bank, Israeli authorities demanded the British government conduct an investigation. Although based in Derby, Sharif attended sermons by preachers linked to *al-Sunnah* at Green Lane Mosque in Birmingham. It is entirely plausible that Sharif obtained a copy of the leaflet during his weekly visits to the Mosque. Omar Nasiri has written extensively about how fundamentalist groups routinely distributed extremist literature outside of mosques, which served to recruit potential suicide bombers. Close co-operation between Mosque imams and local counter terrorism units since 2005 however, has meant that any such activity today is quickly uncovered and action taken.

Media reports link Hanif and Sharif to the July 7th London bomber Mohammed Sidique Khan.¹⁵ According to the BBC, Manchester based businessman Kursheed Fiaz, visited the trio in summer 2001. If correct, the relationship between these three suicide bombers demonstrates how fundamentalist Muslims networked domestically in order to gain support and encouragement for their endeavours. The fundamentalist movement therefore provides the *river* that terrorists rely on in order to achieve their objectives. Of greater significance is that the fundamentalist movement also provides necessary international connections. The link between the fundamentalist group *al-Sunnah* in the Midlands and the leaflets found in the West Bank suggest that fundamentalist Muslims in the UK were actively networking with fundamentalists all around the world, in particular those in Palestine and Pakistan.

¹⁴ M. Bright, 'Suicide bombing leaflets UK link', *The Guardian Online*, 4th May 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/may/04/terrorism.israel>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹⁵ Staff Reporter, '7/7 bomber linked to Israel pair', *BBC News Online*, 9th July 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5161390.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

2004 - Fertilizer Bomb Plot (Crevice)

The first major investigation into British fundamentalist extremist terrorism began in late 2004. Acting on specific intelligence, counter terrorism officers pursued six men engaged in a conspiracy to kill thousands of fellow citizens.¹⁶ Referred to by the codename *Crevice*, covert audio surveillance recorded cell members discussing potential targets including nightclubs, shopping malls and various domestic utility installations. Court proceedings began in March 2006 and lasted over a year. Transcripts consisting of almost 7,000 pages shed significant light on how the cell formed, trained and eventually pursued terrorism in the UK.¹⁷

From the late 1990s, the leader of this group Omar Khyam and at least four others, attended events either facilitated or promoted by ALM.¹⁸ Observers allege that Omar Bakri Mohammed first introduced Khyam to Islamic fundamentalism while he studied for A-Levels. Shortly afterwards, Mohammed is believed to have facilitated Khyam to undertake jihad in Kashmir in 2000.¹⁹ Similar to Birmingham based *al-Sunnah* in the Midlands, the *Tooting Crowd* in South London and *Supporters of Shariah* (SoS) in East London, members of ALM pursued activities and promoted a political ideology designed to help achieve the objectives of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Deeply involved, Khyam and his associates would spend time with fellow members at lectures and weekends away organised by leaders of either ALM or SoS.²⁰ In addition to hearing speeches from *preachers*, the men watched videotapes depicting alleged war crimes carried out by Indian forces against men, women and children in Kashmir.²¹

In a 1998 private sermon, fundamentalist preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri rhetorically asks the audience why Muslims who see nightclubs and brothels calling

¹⁶ D. Gardham, 'The Crawley targets', *The Telegraph Online*, 30th April 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1550107/The-Crawley-targets.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹⁷ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007] EWCA Crim 1612

¹⁸ Staff Reporter, 'Profile Omar Khyam', *BBC News Online*, 30th April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6149794.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹⁹ Hope Not Hate 'The Al-Muhajiroun Network'

²⁰ Silber *The Al Qaeda Factor* pp.85-89

²¹ *Ibid*,

people to evil do not “blast them”.²² Omar Khyam appears to have taken this statement literally. In covert audio surveillance, he discusses possible targets for a bombing campaign with fellow conspirator Jawad Akbar telling him, ‘a big nightclub in central London, no-one can put their hands up and say they’re innocent – those slags dancing around’.²³ Under cross-examination by prosecution barristers, fellow conspirator Salahudin Amin acknowledged that discourse attributable to Al-Masri, directly influenced the conspirators.²⁴ Although circumstantial, this example demonstrates a connection between operational decisions taken by terrorists and the sermons given by fundamentalist preachers.

By 2002-03, after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the attitudes of persons involved in the fundamentalist movement (which included Khyam and his associates) significantly hardened. According to Khyam, ‘when people mentioned things like the UK or the Americans need to be attacked, there would be no defending the UK any more’.²⁵ During the last two weeks of May and into the first week of June 2003, *Crevice* cell member Salahuddin Amin and cell leader Khyam undertook explosives training using ammonium nitrate and urea at a camp in Kohat, Pakistan.²⁶ According to a 2010 research study in the *Long War Journal*, as late as the summer of 2008, Al-Qaeda and the Taliban were operating roughly 157 training camps in the tribal area around Kohat.²⁷ When it became clear in June 2003 that members of the *Crevice* cell were unable to cross the border in to Afghanistan, the more extreme,

²² A. Al-Masri, ‘Issue 8’, *Al-Jihad Magazine*, Circa 1998, www.angelfire.com/bc3/johnsonuk/eng/magazine/aj08.html, (accessed 28th October 2014)

²³ Staff Reporter, ‘Profile: Jawad Akbar’, *BBC News Online*, 30th April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6149788.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

²⁴ Staff Reporter, ‘Accused influenced by Abu Hamza’, *BBC News Online*, 25th July 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5214174.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

²⁵ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p.1933.

²⁶ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p. 5833. During the visit to Pakistan, cell members Amin and Khyam were trained in how to make explosives using ammonium nitrate and urea, the former used as a product in ordinary garden fertilizer.

²⁷ B. Roggio, ‘Times Square bombing suspect trained in Pakistan’s North Waziristan’, *Long War Journal*, 4th May 2010, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/05/times_square_bombing.php, (accessed 12th November 2014)

more experienced Khyam encouraged cell members to participate in a bombing campaign targeting London.²⁸

In Court, Khyam admitted that alleged facilitator and fellow fundamentalist Mohammed Quyyam Khan (also known as Q) gave him funds to take to Pakistan.²⁹ Expressing concerns about investigation by the Police, Q told Khyam, 'its better for both of us if we don't meet each other, because the security services may be monitoring me'.³⁰ Media reports suggest Q served as an Al-Qaeda leader in Britain providing funds and equipment to Mujahedeen fighters in Afghanistan.³¹ On 30th of April 2007, after almost a month of deliberations, the jury found all six men guilty of conspiracy to cause explosions. Making a direct reference to the role of the Islamic fundamentalist movement in terms of incubating the now convicted terrorists, presiding Judge Sir Michael Astill told the court: 'the spiral of contamination does not begin with those standing in the dock, its origins lay in the teachers and preachers of hatred and revenge, who radicalize idealistic and impressionable young minds which in turn go on to infect others'.³² The central thesis of this dissertation builds on the words of Astil, arguing the origins of terrorism lay in the socialization of young British Muslims into hardcore Islamic fundamentalists, individuals who maintain the potential to progress on to become terrorists.

2005 - July 7th London Bombers (Theseus)

In 2008, three men stood trial accused of conspiring with the July 7th 2005 London Bombers.³³ Prosecutors alleged that Waheed Ali, Mohammed Shakil and Sadeer Saleem carried out a reconnaissance mission in late 2004 with suicide bombers Hasib Hussain and Germaine Lindsay. Comprehensive DNA and fingerprint evidence linked

²⁸ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p. 932

²⁹ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p. 1985

³⁰ I. Cobain and J. Vasagar, 'Free - the man accused of being an al-Qaida leader', *The Guardian Online*, 1st May 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/may/01/politics.topstories3>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p. 6599.

³³ D. Casciani, '7/7 accused 'joined weapons camp', *BBC News Online*, 18th April 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7355010.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

all three men to the group's bomb factories in Leeds.³⁴ Shakil and Mohammed Sidique Khan jointly attended the Malakand training camp set up by American Jihadist turned super grass Junaid Babar in June 2003. Consequently, the CPS recalled Babar to give evidence. Thirty-two thousand pages of Court transcripts including testimony from Babar provide a detailed insight into how the *Theseus* cell formed, radicalised and obtained the necessary training for their operation.³⁵

Consistent with terrorist Omar Khyam, London Bomber Mohammed Sidique Khan attended several events hosted by fundamentalist groups. A friend of the Tel Aviv bombers, Khan travelled to Israel just two weeks before their attack – allegedly to conduct reconnaissance. Shortly after returning to Leeds in 2003, Khan underwent explosives training at a camp set up in Pakistan by fellow members of the UK fundamentalist movement. The camp in Malakand began in the first week of July 2003, and lasted roughly 4-6 weeks.³⁶ What does Khan say motivated him to carry out the London bombings? In a video released shortly after the London bombings, Khan discusses his motivation, telling the audience, 'Your democratically elected government continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters'.³⁷ In giving his justification, Khan is clearly citing political narratives associated with the fundamentalist movement, in particular the alleged war on Islam and the legitimacy of terrorism against civilians. There is little doubt that Khan believed the British government had caused the death of millions of fellow Muslims around the world either through sanctions, direct military action or else via covert encouragement of sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni Muslims designed to divide and weaken the Muslim nation. Demonstrating his agreement with the fundamentalist political

³⁴ S. Laville and R. Williams, 'Four years, 52 dead, £100m - no convictions', *The Guardian Online*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/apr/29/july-7-london-bomb-trial>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

³⁵ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) [2009] EWCA Crim 2396

³⁶ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p. 5833 - During the visit to Pakistan, cell members Amin and Khyam were trained in how to make explosives using ammonium nitrate and urea, the former used as a product in ordinary garden fertilizer.

³⁷ Staff Reporter, 'London bomber: Text in full', *BBC News Online*, 1st September 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

narrative that argues for the legitimacy of terrorism, Khan rhetorically informs the audience they are directly responsible for the actions of their government, thereby making them lawful targets.

Fundamentalist preacher Jamaican Sheikh Abdullah Al-Faisal has been widely linked to the London bombers. Reflecting on the government's account of the events of July 7th 2005, then home secretary John Reid told reporters in 2006, that cell member Germaine Lindsay regularly listened to tapes of lectures given by Al-Faisal.³⁸ It is reasonable to infer that Lindsay distributed these tapes to fellow conspirators. Throughout 2004, Al-Faisal travelled and lectured to audiences of predominantly young Muslim males in mosques around the country. These include *Markazi Masjid* in Dewsbury, Leeds, a location previously frequented by Sidique-Khan and alleged to be a "hotbed" of radicalisation.³⁹ Court evidence demonstrates that the London bombers wholeheartedly agreed with the obligation to pursue Jihad as promoted to them by Al-Faisal. At least two of the London bombers had attended training camps in Kashmir facilitated by the insurgent group Harakut-ul-Mujahedeen. Before hearing evidence from Junaid Babar, defendant Wahid Ali discussed training in Pakistan. He told the court that in 2001 [prior to 9/11], he travelled with Mohammed Sidique Khan to a training camp run by Kashmir insurgent group Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen.⁴⁰ Somewhat nonchalantly, Ali explained, 'we went there [Pakistan], we signed up and told them, you know, we want to do a two-week thing, course, and they said, Sweet, no problem, we'll send you off'.⁴¹ In his evidence, Babar claimed that Sidique-Khan had told him that he had previously fought in Afghanistan before 9/11.⁴² If true, it supports the proposition that members of the fundamentalist actively pursued Jihad and that such activity reinforced their belief in the legitimacy of political narratives promoted by the movement. British Muslims do not suddenly volunteer to pursue a suicide bombing. Only through lengthy involvement in the fundamentalist movement

³⁸ Staff Reporter, 'Bomber 'influenced' by preacher', *BBC News Online*, 11th May 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4762123.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

³⁹ S. Greenhill and L. Clarke, 'Veil teacher link to 7/7 bomber', *Daily Mail Online*, 21st October 2006, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-411748/Veil-teacher-link-7-7-bomber.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.53

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.54

⁴² Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) et al [2009] p. 89

can they develop the mindset, encouragement, and eventually operational support necessary to do so.

In terms of operational support, there is circumstantial evidence to suggest the London bombers were assisted by fellow members of the fundamentalist movement in the run up to their operation. Demonstrating foresight into the tragic events of July 7th 2005, fundamentalist movement preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed had previously warned the public of a “well-organised group” linked to Al-Qaeda who was on the verge of launching a big operation against London. The announcement came a year before and could simply have been a prediction based upon non-specific chatter between Islamic fundamentalist. However, in the months leading up the attack, Bakri told followers of an Internet forum, ‘I believe the whole of Britain has become Dar al-Harb (land of war). The kuffar [non-believer] has no sanctity for their own life or property. Muslims are obliged to join the jihad... wherever you are, and suicide bombings are permitted because Al-Qaeda... have the emir’.⁴³

The extent to which Bakri held genuine forward intelligence of the London bombings is difficult to quantify since he has never stood trial as a co-conspirator. Drawing on his various sermons however, there is a direct link between the actions of terrorists and the political narratives he promoted including the legitimacy of terrorism against civilians. Recognition of this untenable relationship between fundamentalism and terrorism forced the British government to make Bakri *persona non grata* thereby resulting in his lifetime exclusion from the UK. Seeking to downplay any suggestion that the fundamentalist movement incubates terrorism, Bakri denied any connection between ALM and Al-Qaeda whose operatives gave the July 7th bombers explosives training. Responding to the decision to ban him from the UK, Bakri told reporters:

We have no direct links with Osama bin Laden, he declared. But we have ideological links with the world Islamic movement, including Osama bin Laden. We may agree with him in something and disagree with him in something. At the end of the day, there is no proof yet that he is involved in any terrorist activity. If terrorism means someone is supporting Muslims

⁴³ ‘UK cleric urging Muslims to join Al Qaeda via internet - Bakri still not jailed’, reported on Militant Islam Monitor, 17th January 2005, <http://www.militantislammonitor.org/article/id/381>, (accessed 13th November 2014)

against the occupying forces in Somalia or in Arabia, I will never call him a terrorist. I will call him a freedom fighter. I will call him a hero.⁴⁴

Although Bakri may rightly claim not to have maintained direct links to Al-Qaeda, his role as a fundamentalist preacher helped convince a generation of young Muslims including the London bombers that it was their duty to fight against the western war on Islam. In referring to Bin Laden as a Freedom Fighter, Bakri has legitimised the actions of Al-Qaeda and made it Halal (lawful) for young British Muslims to follow his example.

2005 - July 21st London Bombers (Vivace)

Following the success of the initial attack on the London underground, two weeks later, a second terrorist cell sought to repeat the operation. Codenamed *Vivace* by Police, the copycat plot carried out by six Islamic fundamentalist Muslims failed only due to the degradation of explosive material. Trained by the same Al-Qaeda explosives expert, the 21st of July 2005 suicide bombing involved six Islamic fundamentalist Muslims of African origin. Shortly afterwards, Police apprehended all six terrorists who eventually stood trial at Woolwich Crown Court.⁴⁵ We know a great deal about the cell's activities from a study of 12,000 pages of court transcripts.⁴⁶ In particular, evidence given by a man referred to in court only as *Michael Bexhill*, sheds significant light on how the men mobilized, trained and sought to carry out their operation. What is clear from a review of the available evidence is that Police and Security Services maintained no intelligence on the conspirators and were therefore fortunate that the second attack suffered from technical problems thereby preventing a second more devastating attack on the London transport network.⁴⁷

Similarities between the two plots in July 2005 were by no means coincidental. Firstly, the leaders of both operations had received explosives training

⁴⁴ P. Goodenough, 'UK Muslims Being Trained in US for Jihad', CNS News Online, 24th May 2000, <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/uk-muslims-being-trained-us-jihad>, (accessed 13th November 2014)

⁴⁵ J. Sturcke, 'July 21st Suspect Appears in Court', *Guardian Online*, 23rd December 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/dec/23/july7.uksecurity1>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁴⁶ Court transcript: R v Ibrahim et al (Muktar Ibrahim) [2007], p. 2319-2321

⁴⁷ Sturcke 'July 21st Suspect Appears in Court'

from the same Al-Qaeda operative in Pakistan, namely Abu Ubaida Al-Masri. Secondly, long term member of the fundamentalist movement, Rashid Rauf, served as the facilitator, mentor and general line manager for both cells.⁴⁸ Thirdly, all of the conspirators had regularly attended lectures delivered by preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri at Finsbury Park Mosque.⁴⁹ According to a prosecution witness Michael Bexhill, cell members Muktar Ibrahim and Yassin Omar regularly listened to Al-Masri and possessed tapes of sermons given by another extremist preacher namely Abdullah Al-Faisal.⁵⁰ What is important about this evidence is that Al-Faisal has been directly linked to the July 7th London bombers as discussed above. Firstly, this adds weight to the proposition the two groups were linked and secondly it builds on the narrative that fundamentalist preachers have and continue to influence British Muslims to the extent that a minority will cross the line and pursue terrorism.

Members of the cell held deep religious views and would often discuss political narratives promoted by the fundamentalist movement. This included the need to establish an Islamic Caliphate governed by Sharia, intense hatred of Jews and the state of Israel as well as the most important narrative of all, the obligation of every able Muslim to pursue Jihad. In contrast with the majority of fundamentalists however, only those involved in the July 21st 2005 terrorist cell acknowledged the legitimacy of violence against non-combatants.⁵¹ After the conspirators were arrested, Police searched their homes and recovered a significant cache of extremist material including homemade films featuring images of beheadings and other terrorist atrocities. Prosecutors argued the material clearly demonstrated the defendants were supportive of the notion of Al Qaeda and the creation of a Muslim state, they supported the views of Osama Bin Laden, and that they were sympathetic towards acts of terrorist violence.⁵² This evidence demonstrates a further link between material published by the Islamic fundamentalist movement and the actions taken by a minority of its followers.

⁴⁸ R. Pantucci, 'A biography of Rashid Rauf: Al-Qaedas British Operative', *Combating Terrorism Centre*, 24th July 2012, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-biography-of-rashid-rauf-al-qaidas-british-operative>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁴⁹ Silber, *The Al-Qaeda Factor*, p.231

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.233

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.233

⁵² Court transcript: R v Ibrahim et al (Muktar Ibrahim) [2007], p.237

Over a period of several years before volunteering to carry out a suicide bombing, members of the July 21st cell actively participated in events organized by members of the fundamentalist movement. On the 3rd of May 2004, Police photographed conspirators Ibrahim, Yassin Omar and Adel Yahya attending what prosecutors would later describe as a terrorist training camp in Cumbria.⁵³ An expert witness claimed the men undertook a variety of manoeuvres that were military in nature, similar to those witnessed in Afghanistan. In addition to the event in Cumbria, Yahya and Omar attended a second camp in Scotland during the summer of 2004.⁵⁴ Participants told prosecution witness ‘Michael Bexhill’ that the camp in Scotland provided physical and tactical training in preparation for jihad in Afghanistan.⁵⁵ Police have identified the facilitator responsible for the UK training camps as former drug addict Mohammed Hamid. Nicknamed “Osama Bin London”, Hamid is currently serving seven years in Prison having been found guilty in 2008 of providing terrorist training and soliciting murder.⁵⁶ This example demonstrates how the Islamic fundamentalist movement served as an incubator, providing Muslims with access to the necessary facilitators able to arrange training in both the UK and later overseas.

During cross-examination, Bexhill told the court that leader of the cell Ibrahim had asked him if he could take Omar and Yahya to Yemen for military training, in particular, to learn how to handle small arms.⁵⁷ This testimony is important. It shows that until Summer 2004, the *Vivace* cell lacked any viable connection to a facilitator either in the UK or Pakistan. By December 2004, after cell members had attended the Scotland training camp, the situation had evidently changed. Through a connection made either at one of the UK training camps or through Finsbury Park Mosque where the men prayed and socialized, the cell gained the support of known facilitator, Mohammed Al-Ghabra. The security services believe Al-Ghabra arranged for Ibrahim and two other companions namely Rizwan Majid and Shaheel Ismail to travel to

⁵³ Secretary of State for the Home Department v AP [2008] EWHC 2001 (Admin)

⁵⁴ Court transcript: R v Ibrahim et al (Muktar Ibrahim) [2007], pp.2319-2321

⁵⁵ Court transcript: R v Ibrahim et al (Muktar Ibrahim) [2007], p.2322

⁵⁶ O. Bowcott, ‘Profiles: Mohammed Hamid and his followers’, *The Guardian Online*, 26th February 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/feb/26/uksecurity.july7>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁵⁷ Court transcript: R v Ibrahim et al (Muktar Ibrahim) [2007], p.2317

Pakistan in order to pursue Jihad.⁵⁸ This example reinforces the central proposition made in this dissertation. Specifically, that through engagement in the fundamentalist movement, i.e. the UK training camps, British Muslims gain the necessary connections which in turn enable them to undertake jihad training – an activity that can potentially lead them into the hands of Al-Qaeda recruiters.

2006 – Transatlantic Liquid Bomb Plot (Overt)

On the 9th of August 2006, Police arrested twenty-five suspects in relation to a conspiracy to detonate liquid explosives aboard transatlantic flights.⁵⁹ Codenamed *Overt*, police identified the ringleader as Ahmed Ali Khan, a long-term fundamentalist Muslim with previous experience of Jihad in Afghanistan. In a video recorded by Ali-Khan and shown in court, he attempts to rationalise his actions. He tells the audience that his motivation is to ‘punish and humiliate the kuffar (non-believers), to tell them enough is enough, we have warned you many times to get out of our lands and leave us alone’.⁶⁰ The western occupation of Muslim land is one of the strongest grievances pursued by fundamentalists. Preachers constantly remind British Muslims of their duty to fight and die if necessary in order to remove foreign infidels, in particular, those occupying the Arab Peninsula. Directly linking this narrative to terrorism, the motivation of the *Overt* conspirators echoes those of *Theseus*, specifically to punish the British government for their decision to invade Iraq & Afghanistan. References by Ali-Khan to “honour” and “brave” imply a desire by members of the cell to satisfy a perceived injustice, a settling of scores between Islam and the west

Two of the lead conspirators involved in *Overt*, namely Ali-Khan and Assad Sarward attended events hosted by fundamentalist preachers. At a school in East London, preachers including Abu Hamza Al-Masri would tell the young men about the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and how God commanded Muslims to liberate their land by all means necessary including suicide bombing. One might argue this

⁵⁸ Court transcript: R v Ibrahim et al (Muktar Ibrahim) [2007], p.210

⁵⁹ Staff Reporter, ‘Profiles: Operation Overt’, *BBC News Online*, 8th July 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10455915>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁶⁰ H. Siddique, ‘The liquid bomb plotters’, *The Guardian Online*, 8th September 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/sep/08/4>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

process led by experienced fundamentalists had the effect of creating sleeper cells, groups of young men who would wait patiently until the time came for them to pursue training and then carry out an operation. Preachers discerned that America would react to 9/11 with overwhelming force and brutality against Muslims. With this in mind, it allowed them to act in the capacity of soothsayers. Responding to the 'war on terrorism', preachers told fundamentalists 'look at the aggressive Western governments, occupying Muslim lands, killing women and children, torturing men, they really are at War with Islam and we need to fight back to end this humiliation'. Ahmed Ali Khan and his co-accused are a textbook example of fundamentalists crossing the line because of political narratives eulogised by extreme preachers. During cross-examination, Khan claimed the war in Iraq catalysed his negative feelings towards the United States and the UK. Preachers foretold the invasion thereby priming fundamentalists, a minority of whom including the *Overt* conspirators would later volunteer to pursue terrorism.⁶¹

British fundamentalist Muslim Rashid Rauf served as the link between Al-Qaeda and the UK. Interviewed by journalist Peter Taylor for a BBC documentary, former head of the Met's Counter Terrorism Unit Peter Clarke, said that while in Pakistan, the ISI observed Ali-Khan meeting with known facilitator and long term Islamic fundamentalist Rauf. This admission suggests the Security Service linked Rauf to previous terrorist plots in the UK and were monitoring anybody who met him. It also again reinforces the importance of the fundamentalist movement in connecting potential terrorists with individuals who can help facilitate their operations. When Ali-Khan returned to the UK from Pakistan, MI5 immediately placed him under 24-hour surveillance.⁶² Prosecutors firmly established the defendants were in regular email and phone contact with an individual in Pakistan who appeared to be greatly assisting the conspirators and at times directing their activities.⁶³ Phone records show that on a regular basis, Ali-Khan contacted the leader of *Vivace*, Muktar Ibrahim, thus linking the two plots together. Through this connection, Ali-Khan had access to known facilitator and established jihadist recruiter Mohammed Al-Ghabra. On the 18th July

⁶¹ Silber *The Al Qaeda Factor* p.38

⁶² P. Taylor, 'Generation Jihad', [online audio], *BBC World Service*, 5th April 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/documentaries/2010/03/100302_generation_jihad_part_one.shtml, (accessed 11th November 2011)

⁶³ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) [2009], p.2008

2006, a month after the *Overt* bombers returned to the UK, Mohammed Gulzar, an associate of Rashid Rauf, flew to London from South Africa.⁶⁴ On arrival, he immediately went to see Al-Ghabra. Although never substantiated in court, counter terrorism officers privately acknowledge that Al-Ghabra previously radicalised young British Muslims and served as the preacher and facilitator to individuals convicted in relation to the liquid bomb plot.⁶⁵ The *Overt* liquid bomb plot firmly demonstrates how British Muslims can be radicalised towards pursuing terrorism by fundamentalist preachers, and secondly how the organisation of fundamentalist Muslims provides the network to allow those who wish to pursue terrorism, access to facilitators.

2010 – London Stock Exchange Plot

This case study while short due to the success of the Police operation to disrupt the conspirators, thoroughly demonstrates the incubation of terrorism within the environment socially constructed by the organisation of fundamentalist Muslims. Arrested in December 2010, two fundamentalist Muslims from London, Mohammed Chowdhury and Abdul Miah and two from Cardiff, Shah Rahman and Gurunkanth Desai, conspired to detonate a bomb in the London Stock Exchange. All members of the cell were actively involved in the Islamic fundamentalist movement for many years before the plot emerged. Ringleader Mohamed Choudury along with several of his co-conspirators were photographed holding placards advocating political narratives promoted by the fundamentalist movement at rallies organised by the now banned group Islam4UK. On the placard held by Choudury were the words ‘Shariah: The Laws of Allah can solve all problems’. In addition to Islam4UK, four of the defendants were also associated with Muslims against Crusades (MAC), another fundamentalist group proscribed by government and subsequently disbanded. All four men pleaded guilty in January 2011 to conspiracy to blow up a variety of targets

⁶⁴ In email exchanges with the author, Raff Pantucci at the Royal United Services Institute has highlighted the language used in email exchanges after June 2006 contained colloquial British slang, clearly delivered by someone with good command of English. Although born in Kashmir, Rauf was raised in Birmingham and would therefore fit the profile.

⁶⁵ D. Williams, ‘Behind all terror attacks against Britain, Bin Laden's Holy Warrior’, *Daily Mail Online*, 8th September 2009, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1211827/Behind-terror-attacks-Britain-Bin-Ladens-Holy-Warrior.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

including, the London Stock Exchange, two Jewish Rabbi's, the US Embassy and the London Mayor Boris Johnson. Think Tank *Hope Not Hate* claims the US-born radical extremist Anwar Al-Awlaki inspired the men. Lectures by Al-Awlaki were previously available to download from the website of fundamentalist group Al-Ghurabaa. It is alleged that all four members of the plot had formal links with Al-Muhajiroun and are known to have attended demonstrators organised by Islam4UK and Muslims Against Crusades (MAC).⁶⁶

2011 – Birmingham Ruck Sack Plot

During 2012, three British Muslims from Birmingham engaged in a conspiracy designed to repeat the July 7th London Bombings.⁶⁷ By the time police made the decision to intervene, cell members had set up a bomb-making factory and were experimenting with various explosive ingredients. This recent conspiracy was the first major plot to take place separate to the 2003-2006 cluster, which included *Crevice*, *Theseus*, *Vivace* and *Overt*. It is also the first conspiracy in which there appears to be little if any direction, support or authorisation from Pakistan. Compared with the first generation of British Muslim terrorists largely influenced by the likes of Abu Hamza Al-Masri and Omar Bakri Mohammed, the *Pitsford* conspirators were themselves concerned in the radicalisation and recruitment of others.

The core cell consisting of Irfan Nasser, Irfan Khalid and Ashik Ali spent a great deal of time and effort persuading at least two others to join their plot.⁶⁸ Demonstrating a clear commitment to the politics of the fundamentalist movement, leader of the cell Irfan Nasser had sought to act as a facilitator, enabling fellow Muslims to pursue jihad. In his opening statement, prosecuting QC Brian Altman explained to the court that Naseer and a defendant in a separate trial, Rahin Ahmed, were instrumental in sending four young local men, Ishaq Hussain, Naweed Ali, Khobaib Hussain and Shahid Khan to Pakistan for terror training.⁶⁹ Importantly, *Pitsford* represents a transition from a loose hierarchical command and control

⁶⁶ Hope Not Hate 'The Al-Muhajiroun Network'

⁶⁷ Opening note: R v Nasser et al (Irfan Nasser) [2012] EWCA Crim. 2

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.6

⁶⁹ Authors private notes taken from attendance at the trial of Irfan Nasser et al between Jan and March 2013 held at Woolwich Crown Court, London

structure witnessed in the London cluster, to a more isolated, 'cells should do what they can, when they can' approach. In this respect, we observe greater levels of self-reliance by members of the fundamentalist movement. Members were facilitating their own training in Pakistan, choosing their own targets and undertaking their own fundraising with little if any support from the wider network of fundamentalist Muslims in the UK.

At Woolwich Crown Court in June 2013, jurors were unanimous in finding all three defendants guilty of preparing for an act of terrorism.⁷⁰ When sentencing the conspirators, Judge Henriques identified Irfan Nasser as the main driving force behind the plot, describing him as a skilful bomb-maker and the radicaliser of a determined team of individuals.⁷¹ Before commencing the trial, prosecutors issued a 300-page summary outlining the main elements of the conspiracy. An important archive for the study of terrorism, the document contains extracts from an array of covert audio probes installed in the months leading up to the eventual arrests.⁷² Transcripts reveal what the men were thinking about in terms of political beliefs and their religious ideology. It is clear that they strongly agreed with the narratives associated with the fundamentalist movement in particular the need to establish an Islamic Caliphate in order to fight back against the western war on Islam. Although the group did not directly associate with other fundamentalists in London, they clearly adopted the same politics and pursued similar activities consistent with the objectives of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Police recorded cell member Ashik Ali instruction to fellow conspirators to read Sayeed Qutb's book *Milestones*. This text directly informs the extreme narratives that constitute the fundamentalist political ideology. In addition, forensic examination of computers used by the plotters revealed an exhaustive collection of material published by American born Islamist Extremist Anwar Al-Awlaki. Resident in Yemen, Al-Awlaki strongly associated with Al-Qaeda

⁷⁰ D. Gardham, 'Four men arrested over Birmingham 'suicide plot'', *The Telegraph Online*, 15th November 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/8891444/Four-men-arrested-over-Birmingham-suicide-plot.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁷¹ D. Casciani, 'Terror plot: Jail terms for Birmingham bomb plotters', *BBC News Online*, 26th April 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22290927>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁷² Opening note: *R v Nasser et al (Irfan Nasser)* [2012]

in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) and featured prominently in their monthly Jihadist publication, *Inspire Magazine*.

2012 - Plot against Territorial Army base

In April 2012, police arrested four men in relation to allegations of preparing for acts of terrorism.⁷³ Led by *Zahid Iqbal* the very early stage plot concerned attacking a Reserve Army base in West London. Clear evidence of a determined effort by all members of the cell to gain training in Pakistan, eventually led them to plead guilty to preparing for acts of terrorism. In sentencing, the Judge Mr Justice Wilkie remarked, ‘In each of their cases, their persistent commitment to terrorist activity, in a number of different ways, over a significant period of time and, in each case, their willingness to take practical steps to obtain terrorist training abroad, marks them out as particularly dangerous’.⁷⁴ Lawyers acting for the men said that despite pleading guilty, they did not pose an imminent threat to people in the UK and it was an overstatement to suggest they had made genuine plans to pursue terrorism. Consistent with all case studies discussed in this section, the four convicted terrorists were active in the Islamic fundamentalist movement, strongly associating with Al-Muhajiroun and were regular attendees at sermons and demonstrations organised by Omar Bakri Mohammed and Anjem Choudary. This case study also demonstrates the declining significance of Pakistan as a training ground for British Muslims. Unable to secure access to any kind of military camp in North Waziristan due to an increase in US drone activity, the men instead relied on camping trips to the Brecon beacons to develop basic military skills.

⁷³ D. Casciani, ‘Terror threat: Four jailed in homemade bomb plot case’, *BBC News Online*, 18th April 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22200133>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

2012 - Royal Wootton Bassett Bomb Plot

Muslim revert Richard Dart offers a compelling example of an Islamic fundamentalist who crossed the line to become an extremist terrorist. Featured in the 2014 documentary *My Brother the Terrorist*, Dart had been deeply involved in the Islamic fundamentalist movement for several years.⁷⁵ Filmed for a BBC documentary by his brother Rob Leech, Dart demonstrated fanatical adherence to the fundamentalist political ideology. Consistent with other members, he would eventually attempt to pursue Jihad in Afghanistan by first seeking to undertake military training in Pakistan. It was this activity in conjunction with a loosely defined plot to target members of the Security Services, which eventually led Dart and two accomplices to plead guilty to the offence of preparing for an act of terrorism.⁷⁶ It is widely debated as to whether the terrorist plot constituted a genuine conspiracy or whether it was the mere bravado of young fundamentalist Muslims about to embark on the more common pursuit of Jihad. However, when customs agents stopped Dart's co-accused Imran Mahmood at Manchester Airport in 2010, they discovered traces of explosives on his luggage and he later admitted to having received basic explosives training while in Pakistan. In his defence, one of the most common methods of insurgency conducted by the Afghan Taliban involves the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's), which may explain his decision to receive such training thereby leaving traces of explosives on his clothes. It may simple be the case that these three men were mere jihadists with no sincere desire to pursue acts of terrorism in the UK. Mr Justice Simon disagreed, stating during the sentence hearing that in his opinion, all three held 'radical Islamist beliefs' and showed they were 'committed to acts of terrorism'.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ R. Leach, 'My Brother the Terrorist', [online video], 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b042m637>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁷⁶ A. Ibrahim, 'How Did Richard Dart Become a Terrorist?', *Huffington Post*, 26th April 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/azeem-ibrahim/how-did-richard-dart-become-a-terrorist_b_3159402.html, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁷⁷ M. Davies, 'UK Muslim convert Richard Dart jailed for terrorism', *The Scotsman*, 26th April 2013, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/uk-muslim-convert-richard-dart-jailed-for-terrorism-1-2909997>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

Profiling a British fundamentalist Muslim terrorist

Drawing on the above case studies, to what extent can we profile fundamentalist Muslims who engage in terrorism? Is it possible to identify any trends or chart any commonalities in terms of age, religiosity, education, employment, sociology or psychology? The consensus amongst academia suggests there is no such thing as a typical terrorist because volunteers transcend the entire social spectrum. This may be true in respect of jihadists and non-violent members of the fundamentalist movement, but there is reason to believe it does not fully extend to the domain of British Muslims who commit acts of terrorism. In fact, this study has discovered a number of attributes linking those who have crossed the line and volunteered for a suicide bombing thereby challenging the orthodoxy. For example, scholars would struggle to identify any suicide bomber who did not entirely believe he or she would immediately transcend to paradise upon the moment of detonation. Drawing on the available literature, in particular studies of Palestine, the overwhelming conclusion is that all Muslims who volunteer for suicide bombing appear on the surface at least to be deeply religious individuals.

By adopting the fundamentalist political ideology, British Muslims create a separation between themselves and potential victims of their acts of terrorism. Subscribing to narratives including the perceived war against Islam, fundamentalists who become terrorists mentally construct fellow citizens as enemy combatants thereby eliminating the guilt typically associated with what are effectively acts of murder. For this minority, the social contract has collapsed and they find it easier to accept the legitimacy of violence against their victims. Such psychological distancing is far from unprecedented. In the 1990s Rwandan civil war, when Tutsi slaughtered Hutu, it was a consequence of government apartheid. Incendiary radio broadcast propaganda divided the two groups into opposing enemies and this eventually escalated into violence and the subsequent genocide. This analogy is particularly useful. British Muslims are socialised through their involvement in the fundamentalist movement to adopt extreme narratives and undertake activities that eventually lead a minority towards pursuing acts of terrorist violence. On the surface they would appear to be violent, thugs with complete disregard for the rule of law and human life. This section rejects the orthodoxy and instead argues that terrorists are compassionate, empathetic and believe strongly in the greater good of their actions. The London

bombers believed the death of 52 civilians would help end the oppression of fellow Muslims at the hands of western governments. Viewed from an altruistic perspective, it could be argued that Mohammed Sidique Khan acted rationally, sacrificing his one life for the lives of millions.

Not all fundamentalists become terrorists

When profiling British Muslim's who undertake acts of terrorism, it is important to avoid confusing, misinterpreting, extrapolating or conflating different types of research into the subject. A 2013 study claimed that youth, wealth and educational status were risk factors associated with violent radicalisation.⁷⁸ On closer inspection, however, the report presented an insight into who is *sympathetic* of terrorist violence, not necessarily who has the potential to pursue it. While a specific demographic may endorse terrorism and agree with its legitimacy, this does not imply they would engage in such conduct themselves and thus require preventative intervention. By misinterpreting research on radicalisation, policy makers risk wasting valuable time and resources. For example, one of the most common criticisms attached to the government's PREVENT programme, which seeks to divert young Muslim men away from pathways towards radicalisation, is that it engages with persons who were never at risk of becoming radicalised in the first place. Only a small minority of British Muslims who engage with the Islamic fundamentalist movement will eventually go on to pursue terrorism. Individuals, those who call for the worldwide implementation Sharia, send finance and equipment to insurgents or pursue Jihad in Syria – do not necessarily present the same characteristics as those who volunteer for suicide terrorism. If there were no such distinction, one expects a far higher number of fundamentalist Muslims volunteering for suicide bombing.

Psychology

With over ten years experience of pursuing extremist terrorists, one member of SO15 counter terrorism command has suggested that the typical volunteer, 'lacks education,

⁷⁸ M. Pizzi, 'Youth, wealth and education found to be risk factors for violent radicalization', *Al-Jazeera*, 19th March 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/3/19/radicalization-riskfactors.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

may have suffered parental abuse, fallen out with fathers or felt the need to prove themselves'.⁷⁹ This description leads us to ask whether terrorists suffer from any kind of psychological deficiency that predisposes them commit violence against unarmed civilians. Is it the case that traumatic experiences in childhood have stunted normal behavioural development? Convicted British terrorist Isa Andrew Ibrahim used drugs from an early age; this caused severe emotional and social problems both at home and at school. His life further disintegrated when the drug habits worsened and he became addicted to heroin and cocaine.⁸⁰ The fundamentalist movement offered him salvation, but like his dependency on drugs, Ibrahim was only happy when descending to the very extreme of the spectrum – in the case of the fundamentalist movement, this meant volunteering to commit terrorism.

Our natural instinct is to assume terrorists are cold heartless individuals with little regard for human life. By deliberately killing unarmed civilians, they must surely be devoid of compassion, mercy and humanity. Yet, when interviewed, their apologists rarely support this proposition. Instead, they commonly paint a picture of someone that is kind, compassionate, caring, empathetic and strongly influenced by perceived injustice. In particular, they feel deep personal anger about the deaths of women and children, fatalities the West often refers to as “collateral damage”. Birmingham based Journalist Amardeep Bassey has interviewed the friends and families of many young British Muslims convicted of terrorist offences. Reflecting on the psychological profile of those who make the ultimate decision to take the lives of others as part of a politically orientated terrorist campaign, Bassey has said:

Surprisingly enough, it's the guys who go out and strap the bombs to their bodies who are the most emotional, the most empathic, it's because they can't take seeing their fellow Muslim brothers and sisters being persecuted. They are seeing the pictures and they hear what is going on, they are so driven they

⁷⁹ Author interview with Anonymous SO15 Counter Terrorism Officer, London, New Scotland Yard, 28th August 2013

⁸⁰ W. Heaven, 'Isa Ibrahim was a troublemaker at my school, but drugs and Islamism made him a terrorist', *The Telegraph Online*, 18th July 2009, <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/willheaven/100003816/isa-ibrahim-was-a-troublemaker-at-my-school-but-drugs-and-islam-made-him-a-terrorist/>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

are actually willing to give up their lives. In a perverse kind way, these are the softest, the most empathic, emotionally fragile people around.⁸¹

In contradiction, those who claim to act in retaliation for the deaths of women and children are often guilty of killing the very people they seek to protect. This is not always the case. There are reports of Palestinian suicide bombers waiting until children have left an area before detonating explosives strapped to their bodies. Professor Jerrold Post at George Washington University suggests there is widespread belief that a person, who is willing to kill himself and take the lives of others, must be psychotic, deranged or somehow anomalous.⁸² In his experience, however, Post argues that such men and occasionally women are normal individuals, part of a group with a particular cause to which they have been socialised. This proposition fits well with the concept of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Through socialisation, members are encouraged to adopt certain extreme narratives and undertake activities in furtherance of a core political ideology. In turn, this helps develop the necessary mindset that allows them to internally and externally rationalise violence against non-combatants.

Empowerment over a victim mentality

Why would seemingly kind-hearted men become terrorists and deliberately target unarmed civilians? Perhaps it is because in asymmetric warfare, when the weak have nothing but their lives to give, suicide bombing offers the only realistic opportunity to fight back. One might argue there exists no greater weapon than terrorism, and therefore no greater threat to peace than the risk posed by individuals willing to die in order to destabilise their enemy. Author and senior fellow at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Raff Pantucci, has written extensively on the subject of “Islamist Terrorism” in the UK. He supports the above proposition when he says, ‘the decision to pursue terrorism is not just about guys being oppressed, its about them being empowered, its about them seeing this as a form of empowerment, they are

⁸¹ Author interview with Amardeep Bassey, Birmingham, 17th July 2013

⁸² J. Post, ‘Psychological roots of terrorism’ [online]. Addressing the causes of terrorism, Spain: Club de Madrid, 2005, <http://media.clubmadrid.org/docs/CdM-Series-on-Terrorism-Vol-1.pdf>, (accessed 11th February 2015)

doing something about their system.’⁸³ The case study of July 7th London bomber Mohammed Sidique Khan supports this proposition. In the years before the London bombings, when Khan was active in the fundamentalist movement, he was also strongly involved in positive community action. Along with several other fundamentalists, Khan helped steer young members of the community away from drugs. Mozzam Begg offers a similar example; he was also part of a group that actively protected the community from drug dealing and other criminal and anti-social behavior.

Ability to disassociate

Common amongst British Muslims who commit terrorism, is their ability to distinguish themselves from non-Muslims. This is an important part of the de-humanisation process necessary for the targeting of civilians without feeling any sense of guilt or regret. Part of the mechanism that creates the necessary separation is the construction of a victim mentality. Members of the fundamentalist movement believe there is a war against Islam, they use this and other political narratives to justify acts of extreme violence and their own decision to die – self-sacrifice is the most powerful way of demonstrating just how deeply committed a person is to any given cause. In reflecting on the mind-set of those who become terrorists and what connects them together, Birmingham based investigative journalist Amardeep Bassey suggests terrorists perceive themselves as distinct from ordinary British citizens. He offers the following highly informative narrative concerning fundamentalist Muslims who conspire to carry out acts of extreme violence in defence of co-religionists:

The common denominator between all of them, is that they almost see themselves as, I don't know if victims is the right word but second class citizens, as in there is us and then there is the rest of the British society. We are not quite part of that British society. But in a different kind of way, they are in that they see themselves, we are not British, we are British Asians, we are a separate class of people. We are still British, we can't help but being British, our cultural traits, the way we speak, the way we act, there is no denying it. We are western, we are British but that does not mean we share

⁸³ Author interview with Raff Pantucci, London, 20th August 2013

any kind of shared history with this island and the people in Europe. So they have made themselves a state within a state almost kind of thing.⁸⁴

British Muslims who pursue terrorism do not class themselves as “British Citizens”. They are Muslim first, second and third. The “United Kingdom” is merely a label on their passport denoting where they were born. When making the decision to pursue domestic terrorism, conspirators have already dehumanized their targets. Caught up in the war between the West and Islam, terrorists perceive themselves as soldiers and fellow British citizens as legitimate targets.⁸⁵

Crossing the line from fundamentalism to terrorism

Since 2003, only a small minority of fundamentalist British Muslims have pursued terrorist violence against fellow citizens. The motivation behind men willing to fight and possibly die in a just war against a brutal oppressive enemy is not necessarily the same as what drives a person to murder innocent civilians regardless of how legitimate they believe their actions to be. In this section, we present evidence concerning British Muslims who have crossed the line from fundamentalism to terrorism. Evidence suggests a link between the reasons given by terrorists for their actions and the political discourse associated with the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Terrorists rarely plead guilty; consequently, it is difficult to know for certain what they were thinking in the lead up to their arrest or in some cases successful operation. Our most important resource for establishing evidence of motivation is the transcripts of covert audio surveillance. When alone in private amongst themselves, terrorists are honest, in contrast with public martyrdom videos where they may often embellish reasons in order to further a specific agenda. Besides these recordings, elite interviews with front line counter terrorism officers privy to countless investigations and intelligence material not publically available are a useful source of information.

This section seeks to understand the motivation of British fundamentalists who become terrorists, looking in particular at the role played by the fundamentalist movement. In this respect, there are two key influences. Firstly, the fundamentalist

⁸⁴ Bassey *Author Interview*

⁸⁵ Bassey *Author Interview*

movement has greatly institutionalised amongst its members the concept that British foreign policy has suppressed Islam and humiliated Muslims. In part, those who have crossed the line to become terrorists have done so in order to exact revenge upon the west as part of an attempt to restore Muslim honour. Certainly, Islam readily provides the foundations for the concept of “honour killing” amongst devout believers. Secondly, through association with the fundamentalist movement, individuals may have reluctantly crossed the line from sympathisers to active terrorists. Believing deeply in the cause, British fundamentalist Muslims have engaged in activities that drew them into extreme circles. From this environment, a minority met up with charismatic, persuasive leaders who encouraged them to go further than they might have previously planned. Initially signing up for a tour of duty in Afghanistan, brave young jihadists suddenly find themselves at the centre of a conspiracy to pursue suicide terrorism in London.

What drives young British Muslim men to fight alongside Syrian rebels, will not necessarily shed light on what motivated the July 2005 London suicide bombers. While they may share similar religious and political beliefs, the mindset necessary to defend women and children from a brutal dictator cannot easily be reconciled with a mindset that is willing to kill them. British Muslims, who subscribe to the underlying political ideology and carry out activities associated with the fundamentalist movement, are prime candidates to undertake acts of terrorism. Years spent internalizing and further disseminating sermons given by preachers, has convinced them that a state of War exists between Islam and the West. Consequently, those who cross the line and pursue terrorism often perceive themselves as soldiers, legitimate and lawful combatants no different to any member of the British armed forces. The norm that only a sovereign state can maintain a standing Army does not apply to these men, they are Muslims and as such, they reserve the right to defend co-religionists from acts of aggression.

British fundamentalist Muslims and a minority of moderates agree with the principle of jihad. Consequently, a significant number of them have fought on the front line of various Islamic conflicts around the world. Historically Afghanistan has attracted the majority of western Muslims, since 2010 however, Syria has increasingly become the number one destination. In part, this is due to ease of access and the success of the “Islamic State” in establishing a legitimate Caliphate spanning an area far greater than the territory of the United Kingdom. Although a significant number of

British fundamentalist Muslims undertake some kind of military training, few actually see first hand combat, the majority simply return home after training and get on with their lives.⁸⁶ Between 2003 and 2006, the leaders of four major UK terrorist plots were unable to pursue ambitions of jihad. Instead, they were headhunted by Al-Qaeda operatives to become suicide bombers back in the UK. Trained by experienced operatives in Pakistan, the cell leaders recruited close friends and put in motion their respective operations, two of which succeeded albeit the devices of one cell failed to detonate.

While a typical jihadist is altruistic and sincere, the men who sought death and carnage through terrorist violence acted upon an entirely different mindset. Primarily, it is the need to exact some kind of revenge on the enemy, however minor, in order to restore honour to the Muslim nation. This “settling of scores” is what differentiates a member of the fundamentalist movement who volunteers for and pursues terrorism, from the other members who are satisfied with a simple jihadist tour of duty in some far away land. Those who take up the gauntlet are often reasonably well educated and unlikely to believe their actions will produce real change in the political landscape. In choosing to pursue terrorism regardless, we must consider the possibility these men have effectively been sold the concept of redemption through the act of self-sacrifice. Preachers associated with the fundamentalist movement have given sermons that suggest the moment a suicide bomber presses the trigger, angels carry his body to heaven. In discourse associated with the fundamentalist movement, we find examples of how preachers have elevated suicide bombing above mere Jihad. Abu Hamza Al-Masri sold the concept of “martyrdom” as the ultimate key to paradise, not only for the volunteer but also for members of their family too. To what extent have terrorists acknowledged belief in the day of judgement? By sacrificing their lives in order to punish the enemies of God, terrorists may feel this will weigh heavily in their favour and atone for past mistakes.

British Foreign Policy

The first and most important tenet of fundamentalist movement political ideology argues there is a western led war on Islam. Terrorists routinely cite British foreign policy manifested through the global suppression of Muslims, plundering of natural

⁸⁶ Court transcript: R v Ali et al (Wahid Ali) [2009], p.1258

resources and an active campaign to prevent the re-establishment of an Islamic caliphate as their primary motivation. Narratives expounding this tenet of fundamentalist political ideology capture the sense of British Muslims angst with the latest western bombing of an Islamic country. Although the perceived war on Islam helps recruit jihadists and individuals willing to fund the mujahedeen, the question of whether foreign policy is unilaterally responsible for pushing a minority of fundamentalists towards extremist terrorist appears widely debated. In 2014, former Director of the Security Service MI5, Eliza Manningham-Buller, gave an important public lecture, during which she acknowledged that foreign policy plays a major role in motivating terrorists groups like Al-Qaeda, known to have recruited British Muslims for suicide terrorism campaigns in the UK.

It is the view, exemplified by the Palestinians' plight, but not only that, that the West has exploited and occupied Muslim lands – oil - often supported dictators, and killed its citizens. The Crusades are not forgotten and we believe that it was the arrival of American bases in the holy lands of Saudi Arabia, that first motivated Osama Bin Laden to attack the West, especially the USA, and to launch a global jihad. Indeed the three stated aims of al-Qaeda are to remove the United States and its allies from the Arab lands, to depose apostate rulers and to restore the Islamic form of government known as the caliphate.⁸⁷

Manningham-Buller cites a number of motivating factors behind terrorism that link directly to the political ideology of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. From the early 1990s following Operation “Desert Fox”, preachers in the UK were instructing followers that western governments had occupied Kuwait in order to exploit the oil. Together, preachers laid the foundations for terrorism in the minds of those fundamentalist Muslims who would later go on to commit acts of extreme violence. Terrorists like Omar Khyam and Mohammed Sidique Khan listened intently to the sermons of Abu Hamza Al-Masri and Abdullah Al-Faisal in which the preachers argued the British government was responsible for infant mortality in Iraq through the enforcement of sanctions.

⁸⁷ E. Manningham-Butler, ‘The International Terrorist Threat to the UK.’ Speech given at Queen Mary's College, November 9, 2006, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/about-us/who-we-are/staff-and-management/director-general/speeches-by-the-director-general/the-international-terrorist-threat-to-the-uk.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

Pantucci acknowledges the importance of British foreign policy as a motivating factor behind terrorism. He suggests that foreign policy within a composite of factors help encourage fundamentalist Muslims already deeply engaged in the war against the west to cross the line and pursue terrorism. Specifically Pantucci argues:

Foreign policy blended into an ideology, blended onto a community of people you become involved in, blended into a sort of global movement that you feel you are a part of...but also a sort of general world view about you know the west being at war with Islam and all the injustices around Israel/Palestine. I think its a whole composite of these, I think foreign policy...⁸⁸

Although Pantucci rejects the government line that foreign policy holds little explanatory power, he suggests it covers only ‘a part of the overall motivation’. Otherwise, in his opinion, there would be an awful lot more people pursuing terrorism.⁸⁹ The narrative offered above by Pantucci greatly underlines the central proposition of this doctoral thesis. Specifically, the argument that the UK Islamic fundamentalist movement has blended a community of Muslims together from which a pool of potential future terrorists have been incubated. Respected journalists Duncan Gardham has attended and reported on every major UK terrorism trial since 2001. Asked in his experience what has motivated British Muslim terrorists, Gardham points to several foreign policy related narratives associated with fundamentalist movement’s core political ideology, specifically, the perceived western war on Islam including the occupation of Muslim land and support for Middle Eastern dictators. He argues: ‘I think they would say get your troops out of our land and they would include in that propping up regimes, financing regimes that are not Islamic’.⁹⁰

Investigative journalist Amardeep Bassey claims that in the broad sense, western foreign policy is the single most compelling motivation behind terrorism carried out by British Muslims. However, in his expert opinion based on ten years of writing on the subject, foreign policy is not the initial reason young Muslims orientate towards the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Those who align themselves with Islamic fundamentalism initially do so in pursuit of redemption for past mistakes. Many British Muslims convicted of terrorism have previously accumulated a criminal

⁸⁸ Pantucci *Author Interview*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Author interview with Duncan Gardham, London, 18th September 2013

record involving offences related to drugs and gangs. It is only later when preachers politicize the new recruits that they begin to understand the impact of western foreign policy and how it has prevented the re-establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. For the minority of fundamentalists who progress on to become terrorists', fighting to end western aggression against Muslims becomes the means by which they internally rationalize and legitimize the life changing decisions they have made.

The most relevant foreign policy linked to Islamic extremist terrorism concerns the post 9/11 invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Asked why they conspired to commit terrorism in the UK, the majority of British Muslims currently serving prison sentences point to the invasion of Iraq as the final straw.⁹¹ Opposition to the invasion appeared not just from Muslims, but also from wider British society. The failure of a million demonstrators to prevent war going ahead sent a strong message to members of the fundamentalist movement. It told them that democracy is ineffective, politicians do not listen to the people and therefore the preachers are entirely correct when they claim there really is a war against Islam. Consequently, those members of the fundamentalist movement who went on to pursue terrorism believed that even though a million people marched, it was ignored and they had no choice but to meet fire with fire so to speak.⁹²

Iraq not only motivated terrorists, it also hindered the fight against them. Manningham-Buller has argued that regardless of whatever merits there might have been to putting an end to Saddam Hussain, the invasion caused a distraction for British intelligence whose focus should have been on pursuing Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden.⁹³ Manningham-Buller has suggested the invasion of Iraq increased the threat of terrorism by convincing more people that Islam was indeed under attack. This proposition is well established within fundamentalist political ideology, which strongly contends there is absolutely a war on Islam. Consequently, the invasion of Iraq served to strengthen this argument in the minds of those Islamic fundamentalists who at the time were contemplating acts of terrorism. Offering no doubt as to her position on the subject of Iraq as a motivating factor, Manningham-Buller explains:

⁹¹ Counter Terrorism Officer *Author Interview*

⁹² Bassey *Author Interview*

⁹³ Manningham-Butler 'The International Terrorist Threat to the UK.'

It also showed very clearly that foreign and domestic policy are intertwined - actions overseas have an impact at home and our involvement in Iraq spurred some young British Muslims to turn to terror...no sooner had we resolved one conspiracy, than several more emerged and indeed they proliferated, partly because of our involvement in Iraq.⁹⁴

From the perspective of consecutive British governments, foreign policy is not responsible for the acts of terrorism witnessed in the UK since 2003. However, questioned in 2013 on whether invading Iraq might lead British Muslims to pursue acts of domestic terrorism, former home secretary David Blunkett commented:

There were two elements. Firstly, we were concerned about those who would react against British government policy and therefore could be radicalised. And secondly, the white indigenous population in terms of low level racism, people believing that anybody that looked different was a potential threat, which did happen. We were also trying to deal with the aftermath of the Bradford, Oldham and Burnley disturbances and therefore we were dealing with other forms of breakdown in society as well as this now more obvious one. So there were several strands running at the same time. All at the same time dealing with these broader and much deeper issues, yes the answer is to the original question; we had to deal with both those elements.⁹⁵

Alleged war crimes in Iraq roughly coincided with terrorist plots in the UK between 2003 and 2006. Humiliating mistreatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib Prison in April 2004 and the battle of Fallujah the same year was followed by the fertilizer plot and shortly afterwards the July 7th and July 21st plots respectively. Islamic fundamentalist preachers in the UK found abhorant the two events in Iraq and used them as examples of western oppression against Sunni Muslims. Retaliation to restore Muslim honor became inevitable. When asked whether the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism worldwide and the consequential rise of terrorism occurred due to the war in Iraq, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair vehemently denied such proposition.

So you can carry on explaining all this by saying, 'It's us, we provoked them, it's really — they're just trying to react against Western imperialism — it's

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Author interview with David Blunkett, London, 9th October 2013

nonsense! Blair fumed. If it were the case, for example, that the reason why they were engaged in this terrorism in Iraq was because of the presence of American troops or British troops, you would expect when we get out, the terrorism would stop. It doesn't, and it doesn't because it's not coming from us. It's coming from this ideology, and we aren't going to defeat it until we liberate ourselves from the attitude that somehow we're the cause of it.⁹⁶

There is no question that for Blair at least, terrorism is the consequence of an ideology, not the actions of the west. Chapter 3 of this dissertation rejects this, highlighting how the western sanctions against Iraq led to the deaths of millions of women and children thereby providing the necessary discourse to radicalize a generation of British Muslims. Since leaving office, Blair has openly spoken out against Islamic fundamentalism in places like Syria, Yemen, Iraq and North Africa, suggesting it is the fuel that provides the fire needed to push a minority of Muslims into pursuing terrorism. In polar opposition to Manningham-Buller and downplaying the suggestion by Blunkett that the government feared the invasion of Iraq might lead to terrorism, former home secretary Charles Clarke sits firmly with Tony Blair, dismissing any suggestion that Iraq motivated British Muslims to carry out acts of terrorism. Clarke argues the invasion of Iraq is irrelevant and points to 9/11 as evidence of this. Interviewed in 2013, Clarke claims Iraq is, 'something propagandists try and make their arguments in various ways. You can have an argument on Iraq and its rightness or wrongness. The suggestion that Iraq war was the cause of terrorist attacks in Britain is simply not made'.⁹⁷

In support of Clarke, it is correct that Al-Qaeda declared war on the west as early as 1993 with the World Trade Centre bombings – long before the 2003 invasion of Iraq. However, the first instance of domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims occurred in 2003, one year after the invasion of Iraq. From studying political narratives associated with the fundamentalist movement, it is clear that since the mid 1990s, members spoke out against British foreign policy. Yet they did not make the

⁹⁶ B. Bordelon, 'NBC's David Gregory Slams Tony Blair Over Islamic Terrorism: Didn't You And Bush Make It Worse?', *The Daily Caller*, 27th April 2014, <http://dailycaller.com/2014/04/27/nbcs-david-gregory-slams-tony-blair-over-islamic-terrorism-didnt-you-and-bush-make-it-worse/#ixzz30ClrKaUg>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁹⁷ Author interview with Charles Clarke, London, 2nd October 2013

decision to pursue terrorism until after 2003. If 9/11 inspired fundamentalists to reflect more on the ideology of the fundamentalist movement, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq almost certainly motivated a minority to have courage in their convictions. Manningham-Buller recognises that revenge can play an important role in motivating terrorist. Referencing martyrdom videos she argues: ‘if you watch the chilling video wills made by the British 7/7 bombers, or those convicted in London for the ambitious plot of 2006 to destroy a series of transatlantic aircraft, to mark the fifth anniversary of 9/11, it is clear that their perception of revenge is the main motive’.⁹⁸

Bassey has also discussed the possibility that several of the major terrorism plots in the UK between 2003 and 2006 were a direct consequence of the invasion of Iraq. He reflects on the subject from the perspective of those who commit terrorism:

Well you lot messed up our country all those years ago and now here is a bit of payback for you. I think that has been kind of understated as an additional, almost subconscious sort of thing, and it helps them get over the fact that well you know we are going to have to kill some of our fellow citizens, well they are not really our fellow citizens.⁹⁹

The question raised from reflecting on the views given by Manningham-Buller and Bassey is the whether terrorists are trying to influence policy makers or merely punish them. Terrorists do not realistically expect foreign policy to change because of their actions; instead, they want nothing more than to restore some level of honour to their religion and fellow Muslims. Honour with the Islamic faith is important; so much so that fathers kill their own daughters in so called “honour killings”. If revenge and the desire to restore honour are central motivations for British Muslims who commit acts of terrorism, then these individuals differ entirely from traditional left wing, right wing and nationalist terrorists because they have no specific end goal. While the Islamic Caliphate is the ambition of all Islamic Fundamentalists, carrying out an act of terrorism is a sideline, something undertaken in response to a specific act of oppression against the Muslim Umma. For example, events in Fallujah, Abu Graieb and Guantanamo Bay trigger outrage in the Muslim world with universal calls for revenge. So entrenched are the beliefs of fundamentalists in honour, that specific

⁹⁸ Manningham-Butler, ‘The International Terrorist Threat to the UK.’

⁹⁹ Bassey *Author Interview*

actions such as the 2004 assault on Fallujah push them over the edge. Driven by a strong sense of injustice, fundamentalists cross the line and become extremist terrorists in order to exact revenge and restore honour to their faith. If they are not killed or captured in their act of terrorism, the individuals will return to the primary objective, carrying out actions to help restore the Caliphate.

In conclusion, would a change in foreign policy help stem the rising tide of British Muslims pursuing acts of terrorism? Retired former head of counter terrorism command (CTC), Stuart Osborne, suggests that no matter what the foreign policy with respect to Islam, fundamentalists will always find an excuse to maintain an environment that incubates terrorism.

You will get various motives for doing it. So there will be some that will say, 'Yeah, we've got soldiers in Afghanistan, right, pull the soldiers from Afghanistan, will you stop doing it, and then well then you've got soldiers somewhere else and actually we want this'.¹⁰⁰

In short, the politics of the fundamentalist movement are irreconcilable with western modernity and the archaic nature of international relations. States must act in their own best interests and this inevitable requires the west to prevent any re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate. Consequently, while British foreign policy has exacerbated the situation, equally there can be no negotiated settlement as witnessed in Northern Ireland with the Good Friday Agreement.

Reluctant terrorists

In several cases, British Muslims who pursued terrorism did so following recruitment by a third party. Reluctant volunteers are the result of "top down" radicalisation. Traditionally, upon completion of basic military training in Pakistan, recruits for jihad have either joined the fight against Indian forces in Kashmir or the ranks of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Between 2003 and 2006 however, Al-Qaeda recruited a minority of volunteers and convinced them to return home to the UK to pursue suicide terrorism. British fundamentalists have acted as the go between, regularly scouting devout fellow Muslims and introduced them to Al-Qaeda operatives. Arguably, the most high profile example would be former British citizen Rashid Rauf. Born in

¹⁰⁰ Author interview with Stuart Osborne, London, 10th September 2013

Pakistan but raised in Birmingham UK, he fled to Pakistan in 2004 after allegations arose concerning his involvement in the murder of his uncle. Upon arriving in Pakistan, Rauf immediately joined the ranks of Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) backed Islamist group Harakut al-mujahedeen in Rawalpindi. A committed fundamentalist, Rauf quickly immersed himself in the armed insurgency against Indian Forces in Kashmir. However, believing the real fight to be against America, Rauf travelled to Afghanistan and eventually gained the trust of senior Al-Qaeda commander Abdul Hadi Al-Iraqi. Over the next few years, Rauf helped recruit British Muslims jihadists for terrorism back in the UK. Having convinced them they could best serve the cause by carrying out terrorism, Rauf then organised for a number of British Muslim terrorists to have explosives training with Al-Qaeda trainer Abu Ubaida al-Masri.¹⁰¹ At least two major UK terror plots between 2003 and 2006 link directly back to Rauf.¹⁰²

Duncan Gardham elucidates the idea of top down radicalisation by painting the picture of an “accidental terrorist”. British Muslims with altruistic intentions to wage jihad and potentially die on the battlefield were deemed either unfit to fight or surplus to requirements.¹⁰³ Conditioned by their political beliefs (internalised as a result of years of engaging with the fundamentalist movement), recruits found themselves manipulated by Al-Qaeda operatives into returning to the UK in order to carry out suicide terrorism. Pantucci succinctly defines the profile of a fundamentalist Muslim who either stumbled upon a terrorism plot or became part of one because he was involved in an altruistic struggle in the defence of co-religionists.

Do these people wake up in the morning, and say I want to go be a terrorist? they probably wake up in the morning, and say they want to go fight for my struggle for my people and then someone along the way, someone says something that gets twisted in their minds and on their heads because they see people die, because they see something happen... so it's that or glory of being

¹⁰¹ R. Pantucci, ‘A biography of Rashid Rauf: Al-Qaedas British Operative’, *Combating Terrorism Centre*, 24th July 2012, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-biography-of-rashid-rauf-al-qaidas-british-operative>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹⁰² Pantucci ‘A biography of Rashid Rauf’

¹⁰³ Gardham *Author Interview*

a martyr and fighting for my cause, and dying for my cause, which would be a more interesting option to you.¹⁰⁴

British Muslims who went to Afghanistan in pursuit of jihad expected to die on the battlefield. When it became clear this was not going to happen for whatever reason, they convinced themselves or others convinced them to return to the UK and pursue terrorism. Having already made the decision to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Allah, it then became a case of building the necessary improvised explosive devices as quickly as possible - both the 7/7 and 21/7 London bombers executed their attacks less than six months after returning home from Pakistan.

The reluctant terrorist is also one that has effectively been “radicalised” by a third party. It is not as common as might be inferred from high profile government initiatives designed to prevent radicalisation, but it certainly does happen. David Blunkett gives weight to the common narrative in which experienced fundamentalists indoctrinate vulnerable young British Muslims. Motivation to pursue terrorism then arises from this process which is based on a distortion and misunderstanding of the Islamic faith. Asked if this has come from preachers, Blunkett replies, ‘Well yes, but there are preachers that preach and there are those who sit behind them, working out how this can be done’.¹⁰⁵ What he is referring to is the mechanism in which preachers involved in the fundamentalist movement draw in new recruits and install the necessarily political ideology, later on, men sitting behind them will exploit that foundational indoctrination in order to convince potential terrorists to go overseas for training. Deep within the process, young British Muslims who eventually become terrorists find it difficult if not impossible to leave. Aborted shoe bomber Sajit Badat is a textbook example. Believing fundamentalists had recruited him for jihad, Badat journeyed out to Afghanistan in pursuit of training, but in fact, he had been “groomed” to become a suicide bomber. In 2014, he would testify about this process at the New York trial of Abu Hamza Al-Masri and the son of Osama Bin Laden, both men accused of being involved in terrorism.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Pantucci *Author Interview*

¹⁰⁵ Blunkett *Author Interview*

¹⁰⁶ Staff Reporter, ‘I wore shoe bomb on plane to UK, Briton tells U.S. terror trial’: Man convicted of plotting to blow up flights gives evidence against bin Laden's son-in-law’, *Daily Mail Online*, 12th March 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2578867/I-wore-shoe-bomb-plane-UK->

There appears to be two distinct types of extremist terrorist. Firstly as discussed in the previous section, the pro-active fundamentalist who desires revenge for British involvement in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Secondly, as outlined in this second section the “reluctant terrorist” who is radicalised into pursuing extremist violence. In this sense, the fundamentalist Muslim, who originally planned to be a jihadist but along the way found himself caught up in a terrorist conspiracy. Convincing the latter to pursue terrorism is not particularly difficult if he or she has spent years being involved in the fundamentalist movement. The idea of doing one’s duty for the cause finds favour with Manningham-Buller who has argued:

It would be wrong to suggest that all terrorists belonging to al-Qaeda, or its affiliates, or merely inspired by it, share an identical motivation. But a single narrative compelling to some, seems to prevail, namely that it is the duty of good Muslims to wage jihad against the West, to avenge their Palestinian co-religionists, and more recently those in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as elsewhere.¹⁰⁷

The political ideology of the Islamic fundamentalist movement constantly reminds British Muslims of their duty to pursue jihad in retaliation for the western war on Islam. Buller believes this narrative to be central in explaining the motivation behind British Muslims who pursue terrorism. She also raises the issue of an identity crisis amongst would be terrorists which recruiters exploit to their advantage. Fundamentalist Muslims in the UK are the most likely of their peer group to be unemployed and uneducated. Growing up in closed communities, they face an identity crisis between multi-cultural, pluralistic western society and the more religious faith based lifestyle that isolates them the rest of the world. Manningham-Buller suggests these potential terrorists seek to engage with *Al-Qaeda* or individuals they think have a link to Al-Qaeda because it offers them a stronger sense of identity. It gives them a focus, something they mistakenly believe is noble in a society they find alien:

I am convinced that many are not driven by the al-Qaeda ideology but by the attraction of belonging to a group, doing something exciting, which gives a

Briton-tells-U-S-terror-trial-Man-convicted-plotting-blow-flights-gives-evidence-against-Osama-bin-Ladens-son-law.html, (accessed 19th November 2014)

¹⁰⁷ Manningham-Butler, ‘The International Terrorist Threat to the UK.’

purpose to their lives. Loyalty to the group then becomes the main motivation. And, of course, those committed to the cause are unscrupulous about exploiting and grooming young and vulnerable people for terrorist acts.¹⁰⁸

Amardeep Basseed and Duncan Gardham share a similar view, suggesting Al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan are responsible for motivating initially reluctant British Muslims to pursue Terrorism. Bassey believes that once they make their intentions known while undertaking training, ‘the people who are actually out there on the ground realise, well hang on, you are better off going back... in some of the cases they show their reluctance, ‘no we want to stay here, we want to fight here’. But they are literally told no hang on you are better off going back home’.¹⁰⁹ Whatever apprehension fundamentalists may have initially, Bassey believes that after the decision is made they become fully committed. He comments, ‘So whether it was always their intention to do that, but I think once that, once that call has been made by whomever, that you are going to do something back in your home country, I think they completely switch and their focus becomes right now we know what we are going to do’.¹¹⁰

Omar Nasiri rejects the idea of “top down radicalization” arguing terrorists are not influenced to do anything they have not already internally agreed to do. In fact, they themselves work out in their own minds how best they can serve the cause and act accordingly. Asked to comment on this proposition, Stuart Osborne is of the opinion that there are indeed two different pathways leading British Muslims towards terrorism. He suggests those who gain no direction from overseas will eventually take it upon themselves to form small cells in order to pursue terrorism.¹¹¹ What is interesting about the second type, those who essentially self-motivate, is their desire to gain approval. It would appear that for some British Muslims who have pursued terrorism, the need for it to be sanctioned weighed heavily on their decision making process. Osborne reflects on the 2010 *Pitsford* conspiracy saying ‘there was some information to say there was an individual quite prepared to be one of the suicide bombers, but had asked where it was being sanctioned from. Because if I die I want to

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Bassey *Author Interview*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Osborne *Author Interview*

make sure it's for the right cause and I've actually got a greater destination'.¹¹² In this respect, we can compare British Muslim terrorists with German soldiers who carried out atrocities in the Second World War. Nazi guards stationed at the concentration camps 'went through a process that actually meant that it was about obeying an order, they were quite prepared to do that, and it's about that sort of indoctrination'.¹¹³

Operational Cycle

When a British fundamentalist Muslim becomes motivated to cross the line and pursue terrorism, there is almost no turning back. The operational cycle from inception to execution is typically short in order to reduce the likelihood of detection. In the case of international sponsorship as witnessed predominantly between 2003 and 2006, the timeframe can be as rapid as a few months. If the security services detect the operation, then it will terminate as soon as they have gained sufficient evidence for a conviction. Variables that commonly determine the time to execution include finance, training, acquiring ingredients for an improvised explosive device (IED), prototyping, testing and finally construction of the IED(s). For example, in the case of the July 7th and July 21st 2005 London bombings, inception occurred in early January 2005 with execution less than six months later. In both cases, the suicide terrorists proved both technically proficient and sufficiently experienced enough in counter intelligence allowing them to avoid detection.

In discussing the operation cycle of terrorism plots carried out by members of the fundamentalist movement over the last ten years, Pantucci offers the following account which suggests individuals recruited overseas are trained and then sent back home and given a free reign over how to undertake their operation, certainly in terms of recruitment.

There is a clear operational cycle, guys who were radicalised here then went to Pakistan, received some training there, came back, started running their own plot. Targeting seems to have been left up to them pretty much... in terms of their devices.. they were trained in something over there... so they were taught this is how you make the bomb and this is how you do it. the operational cycle

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

here seems to be that have other individuals they've identified from within their local community, who they will be able to use as part of their plot... again they tell them about a very special job they need help with.¹¹⁴

Building on this summary account offered by Pantucci, we now go into greater depth, exploring the formation of cells, domestic networking, explosives training, finance and lastly foreign support and direction. Our analysis focuses on the connection between each phase of the operation and the role of the fundamentalist movement in helping to facilitate conspirators. It is the central thesis of this dissertation that involvement in the fundamentalist movement provides the necessary support, both in terms of political ideology necessary to gain a sense of legitimacy as well as practical assistance for access to facilitators and sponsors.

Cell formation

Political violence carried out by British fundamentalist Muslims in the UK presents a new wave of terrorism in terms of organisation, finance, direction and support. For example, Shia and Sunni groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza have overtly distinct political and military wings. In particular, each maintains a recognised “brand” and a clearly defined set of objectives. This includes non-violent activity for example acting in the capacity of local government by providing welfare services. Comparatively, we can better align these two groups with the Irish Republican Army (Army) whose political wing Shin Fein served as the organisation’s negotiating arm. In contrast with the IRA, British Muslims who form terrorist cells tend to do so on an ad-hoc basis and mostly recruit from long-term close friends. There is no political wing and therefore no opportunity for negotiation. The purpose of the cell is to execute an operation, not to breakdown the enemy through a war of attrition.

Empirical evidence suggests that within each terrorist cell, at least one individual takes the lead, recruiting cell members, organising the necessary training, seeking finance and directing the operation.¹¹⁵ Bassey has investigated several cases

¹¹⁴ Pantucci *Author Interview*

¹¹⁵ Examples include Omar Khyam from the 2004 Fertilizer plot, Mohammed Sidique Khan leader of 7/7, Muktar Ibrahim in charge of 21/7 bombing plot as well as Ahmed Ali Khan, self described leader of the 2007 transatlantic bomb conspiracy.

of terrorism that originated in the UK and offers the following account of how cells have formed in order to carry out one off suicide bomb plots:

Yeah its always close friends, and its always, close friends who have grown up together, been to school together, live in the same area, have their camaraderie, have had shared experiences of racism, of whatever. The main thing being shared experiences...their loyalties go beyond the fact that he is my fellow Muslim or he is my fellow conspirator, these guys they are only willing to die for each other because of that close link in born and brought up together.¹¹⁶

This close kinship amongst British Muslim terrorists is why the Security Services have found it difficult to infiltrate cells. Bassey adds: ‘that is why I think that you know 7/7 and those kind of plots were so hard to infiltrate in that these guys were very tight, they knew each other inside out, any little nuisances they could pick up on that. There was never going to be any infiltration’¹¹⁷ The exclusion of “outsiders” has made undercover police operations that were common to the prevention of terrorism in Northern Ireland, far more difficult to carry out. Consequently, tip offs from inside the Muslim community or more commonly mistakes made by conspirators, presents the best opportunity for Police to disrupt operations before execution.¹¹⁸

The above narrative given by Bassey does not necessarily account for all terrorist cells that have emerged in the UK. In the case of the July 7th London bombers, none of the conspirators grew up together or attended the same schools. Friendship between them developed within approximately five years of the decision to commit terrorism. Explaining the formation of the London bombers requires reference to the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Through the socialisation process in which British fundamentalist Muslims attend lectures, spend weekends away and demonstrate at various protests, bonds are developed that increase trust and construct deep long term friendships that potential conspirators can rely upon to form cells. Ultimately, when an individual makes the decision to pursue terrorism, it is towards

¹¹⁶ Bassey *Author Interview*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ For example when purchasing large quantities of the ingredients needed to construct explosive devices, use of a single supplier will often raise an alarm.

fellow members of the fundamentalist movement that he first turned to in order to recruit.

Responsibility for bringing the July 7th 2005 group together appears to have fallen to Mohammed Sidique Khan. Fellow cell members Germaine Lyndsay converted to Islam in 2001 and Hasib Hussain met Khan in 2003. Evidence from court transcripts at the trial of Wahid Ali; suggest that Khan and Tanweer jointly founded the London terror cell in January 2005. While pursuing jihad in Pakistan, cell members agree to undertake a suicide mission back in the UK. Lyndsay and Hussain may not have been first choice; it is entirely plausible that Khan had approached other individuals known to be involved in the fundamentalist movement. Pantucci notes the importance of Khan as a leader claiming, ‘Khan recruited a bunch of guys who were part of his community in Beeston, younger men who were clearly in awe of him, who trained with him at their gym’.¹¹⁹ The implication is that cell formation relies on a charismatic individual, someone able to attract impressionable others and convince them that what they are doing is important for the overall fundamentalist cause.

Domestic Networking

Islamic terrorism in the UK has emerged from the environment socially constructed by the organisation of Islamic fundamentalist Muslims. Cells have formed from amongst this environment with additional support from others in terms of training, direction and finance. Between 2003 and 2007, four major UK terror plots were part of a co-ordinated Al-Qaeda linked cluster. Cells shared the same facilitators in the UK and Pakistan and conspirators socialised at various religious, political and family events organised by members of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Long standing fundamentalist preachers including Omar Bakri Mohammed, Abu Hamza Al-Masri and Abdullah Al-Faisal provided the connections to Al-Qaeda needed by the cells to successfully gain the required legitimacy and approval for their operations. Evidence uncovered during an investigation into the July 7th London bombings revealed that two independent cell leaders namely Omar Khyam and Mohammed Sidique Khan had met on several occasions. Covert surveillance recorded the men exchanging ideas on how to raise finance in support of overseas insurgents – a key activity of individuals engaged in the fundamentalist movement.

¹¹⁹ Pantucci *Author Interview*

Since 2007, domestic networking between cells dramatically decreased. In part, this may be due to an increase in counter terrorism operations making it more risky for individuals to associate with others engaged in similar behaviour. Amardeep Bassey comments that cells have progressively turned to the Internet, communicating more through websites, forums and social media. He also suggests that domestic networking is now less about gaining practical assistance and more about gaining encouragement from a wider audience, 'they would not necessarily be exchanging ideas on plots anyway, rather more on religious lines and religious galvanisation. Egging each other on and giving each other support'.¹²⁰ Significant degradation of Al-Qaeda as a direct consequence of the US led war on terrorism has led to a shift in tactics. This more isolated "do it yourself" approach, which really began after 2007, has been part of a global shift in which individuals are encouraged to stay quiet and do what they can where they can. Bassey believes, 'their [Al-Qaeda] directions are, do not communicate too much, just go out and act. So I think in that respect, there has been a far less co-ordinated effort amongst cells in the UK'.¹²¹

Explosives training

British fundamentalists who undertake acts of terrorism may have previously undertaken military training while pursuing jihad. Invariably this has taken place at camps typically located in either Pakistan or Afghanistan. Assad Kashmir is also a well-established region for young Muslims to learn basic fighting skills before going off to join fellow mujahedeen on the front line. A minority of those who volunteer for jihad eventually become suicide bombers back in the UK. The seemingly de-facto modus operandi of these individuals would appear to be based on detonated home made explosive devices aboard the transport network or against other high profile targets such as shopping centres, nightclubs or more secure military installations. Although instructions on how to build an IED appear online, until at least 2007, British Muslim terrorists gained explosives training from experienced Al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan. Commonly, a member of the fundamentalist movement in the UK would facilitate access to such individuals.

¹²⁰ Bassey *Author Interview*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Between 2003 and 2006, Pakistan served as the main training ground for British Muslims who would later go on to pursue terrorism. In all four major plots between that time-period, evidence suggests the conspirators received explosives training in the tribal region of Pakistan from Al-Qaeda specialists, namely Abdul Hadi Al-Iraqi and Abu Ubaida Al-Masri. Former UK based Islamic fundamentalist and alleged Al-Qaeda operative Rashid Rauf provided the necessary introductions for both cells. Operation *Crevice* (discussed in detail at the start of this chapter), clearly demonstrates the importance of Pakistan for the training of potential terrorists. In response to the US led 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, Members of the *Crevice* cell became determined to fight coalition forces.¹²² To do this, leader of the cell Omar Khyam asked an associate to negotiate with a tribal elder in Northwest Pakistan to establish a military training camp.¹²³ Two weeks before the camp took place, Khyam and fellow cell member Salahuddin Amin, undertook explosives training using ammonium nitrate and urea at a camp in Kohat, Pakistan.¹²⁴ It was during this time that Al-Qaeda operatives recruited the two men to carry out a bombing campaign in the UK. While the cell members may originally have been on a mission to pursue jihad, all quickly became willing conspirators in a plot designed to target nightclubs, shopping centres and domestic utility installations.¹²⁵ Unlike plots that followed, members of *Crevice* were evidently not suicide bombers. Omar Khyam recruited Canadian engineering student Mohammad Momin Khawaja to develop radio controlled trigger mechanisms.

Since the failed liquid airline plot in 2006, British Muslim terrorists have increasingly relied more domestic facilitators than Al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan. The four men involved in the 2010 London Stock Exchange plot followed bomb making instructions published online.¹²⁶ In the case of the 2011 Birmingham Ruck Sack bomb plot, the three conspirators received only basic military training delivered

¹²² Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p.23

¹²³ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p.139

¹²⁴ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p.5833

¹²⁵ G. Corara, 'Analysis: MI5 and the Bomber', *BBC News Online*, 30th April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6477777.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹²⁶ S. Laville, 'Al-Qaida-inspired plotters planned attacks on high-profile London targets', *The Guardian Online*, 1st February 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/feb/01/terror-plotters-mumbai-attacks-london>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

by insurgent groups in Kashmir. Throughout the trial, the prosecutors offered no evidence to suggest Al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan arranged for the terrorists to undergo any kind of specialist explosives training. Furthermore, none of the six men convicted in relation to a further plot to bomb an EDL rally in the summer of 2012 received any training or direction from handlers in Pakistan. In respect of four men convicted in March 2012 of preparing for an act of terrorism in relation to a reserve army base, all self-trained in the Brecon Beacons and relied heavily on explosives instructions downloaded from the Internet.¹²⁷

Finance

Over the last ten years, there has been a discernible shift in how British Muslim terrorists have financed their operations. Previously, credit card fraud provided the means by which to fund training, purchase bomb-making equipment and cover the cost of other operational expenses such as travel. Between February and March 2004, the leader of *Crevice*, Omar Khyam and the leader of *Theseus*, Mohammed Sidique Khan met on four separate occasions.¹²⁸ According to UK Counter-terrorist Police, the only subjects discussed were how to defraud banks and building societies. Evidence from court transcripts suggests they did this for three reasons: initially to supply insurgents in Afghanistan, then to finance military training in Pakistan and later on to fund terrorism in the UK.¹²⁹ This connection and information sharing between terrorist cells in order to raise finance was only possible because of introductions made through the fundamentalist movement. Since 2006, conspirators appear to have relied more on the misuse of charitable donations in the hope of evading increased financial surveillance. In December 2006, the US treasury froze the accounts of facilitator Mohammed Al-Ghabra, accusing him of financing the training of British jihadists with Kashmiri insurgent groups. Two years later, the UK Charity

¹²⁷ A. Martin, 'Home-grown terrorists who plotted to blow up Territorial Army base with bomb mounted on a remote control car jailed for 44 years', *Daily Mail Online*, 18th April 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2311024/Luton-terrorists-plotted-blow-TA-base-toy-car-bomb-sentenced-44-years.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹²⁸ Staff Reporter, 'Pressure Grows for 7/7 Inquiry', *BBC News Online*, 1st May 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6610209.stm, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹²⁹ Court transcript: R v Khyam (Omar Khyam) et al [2007], p.2145

Commission banned Al-Ghabra from running any charitable organisation.¹³⁰ Recent evidence of the growing misused of charitable donations occurred in 2011, three men involved in the Birmingham Ruck Sack plot stole over £10,000 raised for various relief agencies to fund their terrorist ambitions.

Oversees support and direction

As outlined above in *domestic networking*, between 2003 and 2007, four major UK terrorist plots constituted a well co-ordinated Al-Qaeda linked cluster. That is to say, during training for jihad, UK facilitators introduced men leading each conspiracy to Al-Qaeda operatives who subsequently recruited them for suicide terrorism back in London. Upon returning to the UK, each group received variable levels of further support and direction as they moved forward with their operation. Established operatives Abdul Hadi Al-Iraqi, Rashid Rauf and Abu Ubaida Al-Masri served as the main interface between Pakistan and the UK ringleaders of *Crevice*, *Theseus*, *Vivace* and *Overt*. Overwhelming evidence gathered from court transcripts, media reports and expert witnesses indicate Al-Qaeda were actively directing British Muslims terrorists in the UK up until at least 2006.

Since 2007, there has been a shift towards what has been termed, “homegrown terrorism”. The post 2007 case studies outlined in the first section of this chapter were carried out with little if any, support or direction from overseas. Former head of SO15 Counter Terrorism Stuart Osborne adds an illuminating insight in terms of how operatives in Pakistan provided significant support to British fundamentalist Muslims pursuing terrorism in the UK:

The major plots that we have had, and....the vivace and the airline plot and the other ones you’ve talked about, were mainly controlled by overseas so these are people that have had some sort of training, and there was some command and control that was coming, the plots were being hatched in bigger plots that were then coming back and there was this sort of overseas sort of inspirational

¹³⁰ Freedom of Information Request made to the Charity Commission by the author in June 2013. Copy available on request to lewis.herrington@warwick.ac.uk

side of life and almost on some of the occasions an.... authority from overseas to actually commit these acts.¹³¹

In a remarkable shift away from the more established top down Al-Qaeda driven approach, since 2007, conspirators have adopted a more bottom up, grass roots operation. This has meant recruiting more from the national Islamic fundamentalist movement if not acting alone. Terrorists have also radicalised internally, limited connections to other cells nationally and in the most part avoided any activity that might draw attention from the intelligence and security services. This strategy of British Muslim terrorists doing 'what they can, when they can' builds upon a message first espoused by Al-Qaeda leader, Ayman Mohammed Al-Zawahiri back in 2004. Pantucci and others have dubbed the self-starters "Nike terrorists". Forget the great plans, forget trying to seek authorisation, direction or support, 'just go out there and do it'.¹³² In May 2013, this new approach reached its apogee when a British born fundamentalist with no training or experience of jihad, carried out the brutal murder of Soldier Lee Rigby on the streets of South East London.

The post 2007 wave of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism appears less effective. Two of the four plots between 2003 and 2006 remained un-detected before their execution. In contrast, Police successfully disrupted all of the major terrorists plots since 2007 before the terrorists were in a position to carry out their operation. The loss of key personal in Pakistan may account for the recent failures. Individuals that were pivotal in helping to direct terrorism in the UK have succumbed to targeting assassination as part of the growing US led drone war fought in both Afghanistan and the tribal regions of Pakistan. Bassey supports this proposition, noting how a drone strike eliminated key Al-Qaeda operative Rashid Rauf in 2009. Bassey underlines the importance of Rauf to domestic Islamic terrorism in the UK when he suggests:

I think through that period 2002 when he arrived in Pakistan until about his death, I think he was the driver behind the British plots. Rauf was the go between man. If you look at the transcripts of Operation Overt and some of the other cases, if nothing else just the text speak, the lingo they used, the fact that he could communicate with them on their own level, therefore he had been there, he knew what to say and how to say it, what buttons to press. Without

¹³¹ Osborne *Author Interview*

¹³² Pantucci *Author Interview*

somebody like him, he is irreplaceable in that respect. It is quite funny how it shows the loss of one man, has had such a massive influence on the European networks.¹³³

During his time as home secretary, MP David Blunkett enjoyed complete access to all of the available intelligence regarding terrorism in the UK. Commenting on the emergence of terrorist plots carried out by British Muslims since 9/11, Blunkett suggests that although the conspirators were home grown, they gained significant influence and support from overseas, ‘The question you really asked was it home grown. There is a half answer which is that some of the things that happened post 11th September were by home grown but they were radicalised, incentivised and provided with the where with all, from outside’.¹³⁴ What this account suggests is synergy between the UK and Pakistan whereby men born in the UK would connect with more experienced terrorists overseas. The two parties would then co-ordinate together in order to achieve a common objective.

The 2003 to 2006 plots show clear operational direction from Al-Qaeda in Pakistan. In 2003, when members of *Crevice* asked for combative jihad in Afghanistan, Abdul Hadi Al-Iraqi refused permission. He told them if they really wanted to do something, they should do it back in the UK. Activities consistent with preparing for an act of terrorism began immediately after the men arrived home. It appears that Mohammed Quyyam Khan (the *facilitator* who financed the cell’s training in Pakistan and is alleged to have been an Al-Qaeda operative) took over directing the conspirators after they returned from Pakistan. We know that MI5 discovered the conspiracy relatively quickly in early 2004 and most likely did so because they had Quyyam-Khan under extensive surveillance. Consequently, *Crevice* constituted an authorised Al-Qaeda cell receiving operational direction right up until Police intercepted the operation and arrested all those involved.

Constituting part of the same four-cell cluster as the *Crevice*, the leaders of *Theseus*, *Vivace* and *Overt* also received direction through a separate Al-Qaeda associate. Overwhelming evidence suggests operatives Rashid Rauf and Abu Ubaida Al-Masri directed the three conspiracies from Pakistan via phone and email. Between 2003 and 2006, Al-Masri recruited cell leaders Mohammed Sidique Khan, Muktar

¹³³ Bassey *Author Interview*

¹³⁴ Blunkett *Author Interview*

Ibrahim and Ahmed Ali Khan to carry out suicide terrorism in the UK. Upon returning to the UK, the cells quickly shifted into the operational cycle. Meanwhile, pursued by the CIA and the ISI, Al-Masri died from natural causes in December 2007. US drones assassinated Rauf on a compound in North Waziristan in November 2008.¹³⁵ Thereafter, kinetic operations using both drones and Special Forces have continued to erode the hard core of Al-Qaeda as an organisation.

In the years following the end of the four-cell cluster in 2006, the role of Al-Qaeda handlers in Pakistan significantly declined. Despite receiving passive assistance from Kashmiri insurgents to obtain basic military training, the evidence suggests the *Pitsford* conspirators acted alone in their pursuit of terrorism. The new era of independent activity arguably began in 2007 with the attempt to kidnap a British soldier and a suicide attack on Glasgow Airport in which the perpetrators received no assistance from Al-Qaeda. The same pattern can be observed in respect of the six men convicted of plotting to blow up an EDL rally in 2012, the four men found guilty in March 2013 of planning an act of terrorism against a reserve Army barracks, and more recently the two men responsible for killing soldier Lee Rigby in May 2013. In all five cases since 2006, there is no substantive evidence of authorization or operational direction from Al-Qaeda handlers in either the UK or Pakistan.

¹³⁵ A. Alderson, 'British terror mastermind Rashid Rauf 'killed in US missile strike'', *Telegraph Online*, 22nd November 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/3500341/British-terror-mastermind-Rashid-Rauf-killed-in-US-missile-strike.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

Chapter Six - Conclusions & Policy Recommendations

Drawing upon a wide range of detailed empirical materials, this doctoral study has argued that an environment socially constructed by the mobilisation of Islamic fundamentalists, was a necessary condition for the emergence of domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims since 2003. Absent of this environment, British Muslims would not have developed the mindset necessary to cross the line and pursue terrorism. By engaging in extremist politics, and carrying out activities designed to re-establish an Islamic Caliphate, British Muslims encountered like-minded individuals in the UK and Pakistan who provided both ideological and logistical support. By deploying elite interviews, court transcripts and an archive of fundamentalist literature, an alternative analysis has been presented that has sought to explain the relatively recent phenomenon in which seemingly ordinary British Muslims have pursued acts of extreme terrorist violence against fellow citizens. Challenging the prevailing theories of trauma, occupation and strategic outbidding, the explanatory emphasis has instead been placed on the importance of religion and how Islam has been used as the basis for an extremist political ideology, one that has motivated British Muslims to pursue fundamentalist activities and, for a minority, to cross the line and volunteer for terrorism.

Characterised as the “Islamic Fundamentalist Movement”, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 examined the rise, politics and activities of this milieu of British Muslims. Critically, Chapter 5 presented comprehensive evidence-linking individuals guilty of terrorism, directly to fundamentalist groups such as Al-Muhajiroun and Al-Ghuraba. Furthermore, by drawing upon ten unique cases representing major terrorist conspiracies, Chapter 5 offered up a developed profile of British fundamentalists who cross the line to become terrorists and examined in detail, the motivation for them to do so. In concluding the previous chapter, the thesis presented analysis of the operational cycle of terrorism plots carried out by British Muslims, highlighting various shifting trends over the last ten years in terms of recruitment, finance, training and operational cycle. From a period of highly organised Al-Qaeda directed terrorism

2003 to 2006, post 2007, the British Security Services have faced a growing number of lone wolf operatives acting with little if any external support.¹

The final chapter of this dissertation is divided into two substantive parts. Firstly, examination is made of how the British government has recognised and responded to the Islamic fundamentalism movement. Initially pursuing a policy of “appeasement” from the mid-1990s, in the years following the 2005 London bombings, politicians began introducing increasingly draconian measures designed to challenge and indeed disrupt the organisation and activities pursued by fundamentalists. Anti-terrorism legislation, counter radicalisation programmes and later anti-social behaviour orders have all featured within the overall strategy targeting the environment from which domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims has emerged. Secondly, reflecting on the evidence discovered and presented throughout the dissertation, the author concludes with a series of policy recommendations. Building on the existing counter terrorism framework, suggestions focus on the re-implementation and broadening of “control orders” designed to challenge the fundamentalist movement, with the overall objective being to help prevent the next generation of British Muslims following a path that may ultimately lead them to commit acts of domestic terrorism.

The Islamic fundamentalist movement presents both a direct and indirect threat to UK national security. When the 2010 civil war broke out in Syria, British fundamentalist Muslims travelled to the region in order to help overthrow the Assad regime. During the first few years the British government, while not condoning the activity, showed little interest in pursuing “Jihadists”. This despite the fact volunteers were technically guilty of committing terrorist offences by fighting on behalf of non-state actors. Significantly, at the time, regime change in Syria featured high on the list of UK foreign policy objectives and therefore “foreign fighters” were effectively serving the governments best interests. However, from 2013 onwards, Islamic fundamentalist groups, initially the Al-Nusra Front but later and more brutally the

¹ L. Herrington, 'British Islamic Extremist Terrorism: The Declining Significance of Al-Qaeda & Pakistan', *International Affairs*, vol. 91, no. 1, 2015; T. McTague, 'MI5 handed £100m anti terror fund to track British Lone Wolf Jihadists', *Daily Mail Online*, 9th January 2015, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2903192/MI5-handed-100-anti-terror-fund-track-British-lone-wolf-jihadists-going-fight-Iraq-Syria.html, (accessed 14th January 2015)

Islamic State (IS), began executing western hostages causing a shift in government policy from tacit approval, towards active proscription and prevention.²

Proving increasingly popular to western jihadists, IS has attracted foreign fighters from all around the world. Widespread Internet propaganda featuring acts of extreme violence including the execution of enemy combatants and forced conversion to Islam for non-Muslim civilians has proved to be a powerful mobiliser. Shortly after the beheading of American journalist James Foley in August 2014, it emerged that the main suspect had previously been a part of the insular UK Islamic fundamentalist movement. Media reports suggested that Abdel-Majed Bary had been gradually “radicalised” after coming into contact with outspoken preacher Anjem Choudary.³ Writing in the *Daily Mail* concerning the acts of violence carried out by British Muslims in Syria, Senior Fellow at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ISCR) at King’s College, London, Shiraz Maher wrote:

The murder of American journalist James Foley has further exposed the terrifying role played by British-born radicals in the barbaric jihadist movement. What is so disturbing is not just the scale of their involvement — with more than 500 British Muslims now estimated to be fighting for the extremists in Syria and Iraq — but also the depths of their violence. It is no exaggeration to say that the British militants are among the most vicious and vociferous of the recruits to the Islamic State terror network, which aims to establish a medieval-style caliphate in the region.⁴

By late 2014, it became clear that British Muslims in the UK were now engaged in the most atrocious acts of terrorist violence in Syria, most notably the execution of

² V. Dodd, 'Syria Crisis: Stop your sons joining war urges Met', *The Guardian Online*, 24th April 2014, www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/apr/23/sons-war-syria-metropolitan-police, (accessed 14th January 2015)

³ S. Tomlinson, 'The descent of Jihadi John', *Daily Mail Online*, 24th August 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2733228/The-descent-Jihadi-John-Shocking-Facebook-photos-transformation-rapper-streets-Maida-Vale-prime-suspect-brutal-beheading-journalist.html>, (accessed 17th December 2014)

⁴ S. Maher, 'Why the British Jihadist's fighting in Syria and Iraq are so vicious', *Daily Mail Online*, 21st August 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2730372/Why-British-jihadis-fighting-Syria-Iraq-vicious-SHIRAZ-MAHER.html>, (accessed 17th December 2014)

western journalists. The potential for these jihadists with British passports to gain explosives training and return to the UK in pursuit of terrorism rang alarm bells throughout Whitehall. Consequently, while the immediate need became the prevention of British Muslims joining IS, it was clear that more needed to be done to prevent the long term radicalisation of young British Muslims, in other words, tougher measures were required to challenge the Islamic fundamentalist movement in the UK. In August 2014, London Mayor Boris Johnson called for tougher powers to deal with British Muslims who volunteered to fight in Syria. Writing for the *Daily Telegraph*, Johnson raised the stakes claiming ‘control orders should be reinstated for the most serious cases with some of those stripped of their citizenship’.⁵

In November 2014, two men who had returned to the UK after volunteering for Jihad in Syria were jailed for 12 years respectively.⁶ Defying the potential for rehabilitation, de-radicalisation or re-integration, these exceptionally harsh sentences demonstrate the concern amongst ministers over the threat posed by foreign fighters. In contrast to those who joined Islamic militia groups in Bosnia during the 1990s and were welcomed back with open arms, the message now sent out to all British Jihadists appears clear, ‘do not come home, if you do then you will go to jail for a very long time’. While such an approach may indeed help mitigate the potential threat from trained jihadists returning to the UK, the long-term implication is reduced co-operation from the Muslim community. As the mother of one of the two men convicted has explained, ‘family members are now far less likely to inform the police of any suspicious activity due to fears over how suspects (brothers, cousins, fathers) may subsequently be treated’.⁷ Accordingly, this chapter proceeds by examining how the British government has responded to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism within the UK. In particular, measures taken to challenge an ideology that has radicalised a

⁵ Staff Reporter, ‘Britons in Syria and Iraq should be presumed guilty, Boris Johnson says’, *BBC News Online*, 25th August 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28923689>, (accessed 5th December 2014)

⁶ D. Casciani, ‘British Brothers Jailed for training at Syria Terror Camp’, *BBC News Online*, 26th November 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30213771>, (accessed 14th January 2015)

⁷ M. Hall, ‘Mother who alerted police to British jihadist son feels ‘betrayed’ over his 12-year sentence’, *Telegraph Online*, 7th December 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11278868/Mother-who-alerted-police-to-British-jihadist-son-feels-betrayed-over-his-12-year-sentence.html>, (accessed 17th December 2014)

minority of British Muslims in support of Jihad and, to a limited extent, acts of extremist terrorism.

Government Response

Constituting the core thesis of this dissertation, the previous chapter examined in detail British Muslims who have pursued domestic terrorism since 2003. Clearly demonstrating the incubatory link between fundamentalism and terrorism, it has been shown that the organization of Islamic fundamentalists served to nurture a mindset necessary for terrorism, specifically, through the socialization and encouragement of members to pursue activities designed to help re-establish the Islamic Caliphate. Years spent internalizing and promoting the movement's political ideology, made terrorism an inescapable consequence of high profile western invasions into Iraq and Afghanistan. Events that brought into question US commitment to human rights (for example the torture of Muslim detainees at Abu Ghraib prison and Guantanamo Bay along with alleged massacres during the battle of Fallujah), served to motivate a minority of British fundamentalist Muslims to cross the line in order to exact public revenge on politicians and the society who elected them.

Notwithstanding the 2004 fertilizer plot, which led to the conviction of four British Muslims for terrorism offences, there was little recognition of the importance of the fundamentalist movement until at least 2005. This was arguably a significant failure of analysis on the part of the UK central intelligence machinery and allowed an extreme political ideology to mobilize an entire network of Muslims throughout the UK without an adequate government response. Today, this milieu of fundamentalist Muslims can be found fighting in Syria, Yemen and Somalia, a minority of whom present a clear and present danger to British national security. Going forward, this section examines in detail how the British government has firstly, recognized the role of Islamic fundamentalism in the UK and secondly, how it has challenged actors and their political ideology in order to stem the next generation of extremist terrorists.

Recognising the problem

Following the abrupt end to the Cold War, Britain focused much of her security effort on finding peace in Northern Ireland. This was understandable given that the attacks mounted by the IRA during the 1990s constituted a significant threat, not least to the

financial sector, which had replaced manufacturing as the key British economic activity. Throughout the 1990's and until as late as 2005, terrorism carried out overseas by British Muslims attracted little interest from either Special Branch or national security agencies.⁸ During this period, London became a safe haven to fundamentalists engaged with countless insurgent groups around the world. A so-called "covenant of security" between Islamic fundamentalists and the British government allowed terrorists free reign to operate on the strict understanding they never interfered with British interests. By invading Afghanistan and shortly afterwards Iraq, the covenant collapsed and the attention of Islamic fundamentalist Muslims quickly turned to the UK. Moreover, there was a degree of psychological dissonance regarding British Muslims and this ensured that, even as the security service became anxious about the presence of fundamentalist Muslims in nearby France during early 2000, they remained notably relaxed about the UK's own domestic capacity to generate violent extremists.⁹ Despite the creation of a Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre in June 2003, the key linkages were still not identified or established.

It was only in the immediate aftermath of the July 2005 London Bombings that Prime Minister, Tony Blair, ordered a full enquiry. A comprehensive examination of the perpetrators identified their long-term involvement in the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Towards the end of the century, long before the events of 9/11, the ringleader of the July 7th London bombers, Mohammed Sidique Khan, had attended training camps in Afghanistan and raised finance for the Taliban. Similar engagement by other British Muslims in activities promoted by the fundamentalist movement led to the introduction of a raft of initiatives, policies, programmes and legislation, all designed to disrupt and as far as possible dismantle the Islamic fundamentalist movement in the UK. This section examines that response, looking specifically at the focus on challenging the fundamentalist movement rather than on protecting against terrorism more generally.

⁸ Author interview with David Blunkett, London, 9th October 2013

⁹ Diary Entry, Monday, 24 January 2000, Piers Morgan, *The Insider: The Private Diaries of a Scandalous Decade* (London: Ebury Press, 2005), pp.250-1

In 2004, five British Muslim men plotted a bombing campaign against high profile targets in the UK.¹⁰ The following year on July 7th 2005, four successfully carried out a suicide attack on the London underground killing 52 innocent civilians. Speaking at the time, former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, rejected any suggestion that Islamic fundamentalism in the UK had nurtured the bombers, pointing the finger instead at international terrorist groups.¹¹ Blame centred on Al-Qaeda whom Blair accused of targeting vulnerable British Muslims, brainwashing them into carrying out murderous acts of violence. Shortly after details of the July 7th cell became public, UK based Islamic fundamentalist group Al-Muhajaroon (ALM) quietly disbanded. While Blair may not have publically admonished the fundamentalist movement, preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed recognised the role of his organisation and seeking to avoid deportation, quickly sought to downplay growing accusations he had helped radicalise the four conspirators.

After leaving office in 2010, Blair demonstrated a paradigm shift in his thinking, becoming progressively more assertive in his condemnation of Islamic fundamentalism. Writing in 2013, he appeared more critical of Islam when he argued, ‘there is a problem within Islam – from the adherents of an ideology that is a strain within Islam. And we have to put it on the table and be honest about it’.¹² The following year, Blair warned the West not to be side tracked by events in Ukraine but rather to unite against the threat posed by the rise of Sunni fundamentalist groups in Libya, Yemen and more recently Syria.¹³ Blair suggested that tackling ‘a radicalised and politicised view of Islam’ should be at the top of the global political agenda. The shift from apologist to accuser, suggests those in government, privately at least, fully recognised that while terrorists may be in the minority, the political ideology guiding them is much more mainstream than previously acknowledged. In order to defeat terrorism, the objective must be to disrupt the underlying fundamentalist ideology

¹⁰ Referred to by Police as Operation *Crevice* but known in the media as the *Fertilizer bomb plot* as the conspirators were arrested in possession of 600 kg of fertilizer intended to be used by the men to construct an improvised explosive device

¹¹ Staff Reporter, ‘Full text: Blair speech on terror’, BBC News Online, 16th July 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4689363.stm>, (accessed 14th January 2015)

¹² Staff Reporter, ‘Blair says extremism within Islam can’t be ignored’, *Times of Israel*, 3rd June 2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/blair-says-extremism-within-islam-cant-be-ingored/>, (accessed 12th November 2013)

¹³ *Ibid.*

promoted globally, even by those who would not themselves engage in violence against non-combatants.

Reflecting on the events of 9/11, former MI5 Director Baroness Eliza Manningham-Buller appears to acknowledge the notion of a global Islamic fundamentalist movement incubating terrorism worldwide. In a speech given at Queen Mary's College in 2006, she suggests that one of the primary aims of the attack was to unite fundamentalist Muslims around the world.¹⁴ Analysing the long-term ambitions of Al-Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, Manningham-Buller suggests 'he must have expected that these murderous attacks would force a reaction that would make it easier for him to persuade others of his argument that Islam was under attack from the west'.¹⁵ Despite concerns within the security services, the British government was slow to react. Even in light of 9/11, recognition that fundamentalist Muslims in the UK presented a threat to national security did not occur in earnest until 2005. This is surprising given the involvement of British citizens in the 2001 shoe bombing plot, the 2003 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv and most significantly the 2003 fertilizer plot discussed above.

Reflecting on the failure to recognise an emerging threat from "home grown terrorists" until 2005, former Home Secretary David Blunkett has said:

Most of the intelligence and security effort was going into Northern Ireland despite the Good Friday agreement, the fringe groups like the real IRA etc. So there was very little activity in terms of any potential threat from those with a Muslim, later to be known as Al-Qaeda background, despite the fact there had been an attack in east Africa on American embassies in 1998... It was not until the attack on July 7th 2005 that people realized there had been a genuine shift, it wasn't just a shift in perception. There had been a definite shift in the radicalisation of those born and brought up here.¹⁶

¹⁴ E. Manningham-Butler, 'The International Terrorist Threat to the UK.' Speech given at Queen Mary's College, November 9, 2006, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/about-us/who-we-are/staff-and-management/director-general/speeches-by-the-director-general/the-international-terrorist-threat-to-the-uk.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Blunkett *Author Interview*

Asked directly whether the 2003 fertilizer plot (which involved British Muslims with a long term participation in the fundamentalist movement) was seen as a wake-up call, David Blunkett replied somewhat candidly, 'Well it wasn't, is the honest truth.'¹⁷ Despite evidence showing a clear conspiracy in which Islamic fundamentalists in the UK had actively sought to carry out a bombing campaign targeting British citizens, ministers continued to focus externally, in particular, the alleged threat posed by President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein. The absence in Whitehall of any serious recognition concerning the threat posed by the fundamentalist movement before 2005, contrasts with comments made by the former head of counter terrorism, Peter Clarke. Strikingly, in a 2007 documentary investigating the London bombers, he remarks: 'amongst his colleagues in the years leading up to the event, it was a question of when London would be attacked by home-grown terrorists rather than if'.¹⁸ The implication is that before 7/7, there existed a disconnect, specifically between the government and some elements of the security services, in terms of the threat posed by the UK Islamic fundamentalist movement.

It would be incorrect to say the British government did not at least partially recognise the role of extremist preachers prior 2005. However, the widely publicised detention of Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza Al-Masri were largely symbolic rather than a sincere attempt to disrupt the organisation of fundamentalist Muslims in the UK. Ministers considered overt verbal support for Al-Qaeda by preachers to be a public relations disaster. Arresting certain high profile individuals therefore, was more about building public confidence than actually challenging fundamentalism. Blunkett acknowledges this when he comments:

I think there are at times just let me emphasise this, there are times when you have to be seen to take action. Not because it is a meaningless gesture, but if you don't the public lose faith in the fact, you are not addressing what appear to be in your face issues, provocation. And if you don't do that then the media start writing that its all out of control, that you don't give a damn, that you are

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ P. Taylor, 'Generation Jihad', [online audio], *BBC World Service*, 5th April 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/documentaries/2010/03/100302_generation_jihad_part_one.shtml, (accessed 11th November 2011)

easy on them, that you are so liberal that they can get away with anything. And therefore, you have to act in order to build secure confidence.¹⁹

Therefore, until 2005, government action against the fundamentalist movement focused predominantly on outspoken preachers. Policy makers were yet to appreciate the various elements and inner workings of the movement and how men like Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza Al-Masri constituted only part of the overall problem.

Accordingly, following the London Bombings, government perception of the fundamentalist movement underwent a paradigm shift. The failed 21/7 bombers provided the British government with remarkable new details about the generation of these plots. Clear evidence of how the organisation of fundamentalist Muslims helped incubate the conspirators forced the government to act in order to disrupt the environment from which they had emerged. Preachers who openly glorified terrorism stood accused of directly influencing British born Islamic terrorists. Six days after the attacks, Tony Blair declared that new anti-terror laws would aim to ‘pull up this evil ideology by its roots’.²⁰ After ten years of acting with impunity, the fundamentalist movement were now at the forefront of counter terrorism strategy. Objectives set out in the 2006 Labour Government PREVENT programme included the need to challenge violent extremist ideology, disrupt those who promote violent extremism and address the grievances, which ideologues are exploiting²¹ Roughly translated, this meant a greater focus on challenging the political ideology of the fundamentalist movement and curtailing activities associated with extremist preachers.

Elected in 2010, the Conservative & Liberal coalition accorded far more importance to the role of Islamic fundamentalism as an incubator of extremist terrorism. Speaking in Munich at the start of 2011, newly appointed Prime Minister, David Cameron, fully acknowledged the failure thus far to disrupt the environment from which terrorism and the foreign fighter problem have emerged, pledging reform

¹⁹ Blunkett *Author Interview*

²⁰ S. Geffrey, ‘The glorification of terrorism’, The Guardian Online, 15th February 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/feb/15/qanda.terrorism>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

²¹ Prevent is one of the four elements of CONTEST, the government’s counter-terrorism strategy. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-the-uk-against-terrorism/supporting-pages/prevent>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

and a new approach.²² In contrast to the recent position taken by Blair however, Cameron continued to emphasize a narrative that shielded Islam as a whole, through the disassociation and the framing of terrorists as effectively ‘warped, entirely misguided Muslims’.²³ The new Prime Minister did, however, hint at the political ideology of fundamentalist movement being at the heart of UK domestic terrorism, telling the audience of journalists, academics and policy makers:

Nevertheless, we should acknowledge that this threat comes overwhelmingly from young men who follow a completely perverse and warped interpretation of Islam and who are prepared to blow themselves up and kill their fellow citizens. We have to get to the root of the problem. We need to be absolutely clear on where the origins of these terrorist attacks lie – and that is the existence of an ideology, 'Islamist extremism'.²⁴

Referred to by Cameron as “Islamist extremism”, what he is actually discussing is the political ideology of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. It is the various constituent narratives ranging from the adoption of Shariah to the legitimacy of jihad, which are at odds with western democracy and are responsible for radicalizing potential terrorists. Later in the speech, Cameron appears more aligned with Blair in securitizing those who “accept” parts of the political ideology associated with fundamentalism even if they themselves do not engage in it. Far more appreciative of the problem, he notes that “sympathizers” exist on the same spectrum as terrorists even if they reject violence:

Islamist extremism is a political ideology, supported by a minority. At the furthest end are those who back terrorism to promote their ultimate goal: an entire Islamist realm, governed by an interpretation of sharia. Move along the spectrum, and you find people who may reject violence, but who accept various parts of the extremist worldview including real hostility towards western democracy and liberal values.²⁵

²² D. Cameron, ‘Speech on radicalisation and Islamic extremism’, 5th February 2011, <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology>, (accessed 21st November 2014)

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

In proposing the concept of an “extremist spectrum”, Cameron clearly recognizes the universe of fundamentalism and how a small minority support terrorist violence even if they themselves would not directly undertake it. Although Islamic fundamentalists who commit terrorism may well be in the minority, all committed members of the fundamentalist movement possess the necessary mindset that might one day lead them to cross the line and volunteer as suicide bombers. Concluding his speech, Cameron highlights how non-violent “extremists” have overwhelmingly influenced terrorists and thus the challenge lies in disrupting the environment from which they emerge:

As evidence emerges about the backgrounds of those convicted of terrorist offences, it is clear that many of them were initially influenced by what some have called 'nonviolent extremists' and then took those radical beliefs to the next level by embracing violence...if we are to defeat this threat, I believe it's time to turn the page on the failed policies of the past. So first, instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we as governments and societies have got to confront it, in all its forms.²⁶

The overall thesis presented in this dissertation argues the term “non-violent extremists” represent the majority of fundamentalist Muslims in the UK. Without the nurturing environment they provide, there is good reason to argue the flow of potential terrorists would eventually dissipate. Cameron fully concedes this proposition, going forward he believes both government and society at large have a role to play in disrupting the fundamentalist movement:

First, confronting and undermining the fundamentalist ideology. Whether they are violent in their means or not, we must make it impossible for the extremists to succeed. For governments, there are obvious ways we can do that. We must ban preachers of hate from coming to our countries. We must also proscribe organizations that incite terrorism – against people at home and abroad. Governments must also be shrewder in dealing with those that, while not violent, are certainly, in some cases, part of the problem.²⁷

Challenging the extremist ideology is now at the heart of British counter terrorism policy. However, although Cameron talks about banning preachers of hate, he offers

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

little indication of what constitutes hate and what should therefore be challenged. Within Islamic fundamentalism, *hate* is not necessarily what is being promoted. The radicalization process is not designed to turn Muslims against the west *per se*, rather it is there to help them recognize the role of Islam as a supreme way of life and therefore something to actively promote universally. According to fundamentalists, when the world is governed entirely by Sharia, there will be no more war, famine or injustice. Consequently, acts of terrorism are borne out of the belief held by fundamentalists that Islam is being constrained due to western fears that a Caliphate might rival capitalist hegemony.

In order to prevent further acts of terrorism in the UK, Cameron suggests a less tolerant, less inclusive approach. Giving little weight to the suggestion that a change in foreign policy might be the most rational solution, the government is no longer focused on appeasement, but rather on defeating fundamentalist political ideology by challenging its core political narratives at home. Calling on society to join the government in ridding the UK of Islamic fundamentalism, Cameron has said of the political ideology that has helped motivate British Muslims to volunteer for jihad in Syria:

We need to confront it with confidence. Confront the ideology that drives it by defeating the ideas that warp so many minds at their root. And confront the issues of identity that sustain it by standing for a much broader and generous vision of citizenship in our countries. None of this will be easy. We need stamina, patience and endurance. And it won't happen at all if we act alone.²⁸

The solution presented by Cameron appears to be a resolute end to the passive tolerance of the fundamentalist movement concomitant with actively promoting western values. But neither Blair, nor Brown nor Cameron have been clear about what this means in practice. Having demonstrated the gradual recognition by successive British government of the significance of the Islamic fundamentalist movement as an incubator of terrorism, we look now at how this has translated into practical action with respect to policy initiatives, legislation and lastly front line services. Having thoroughly examined the progressive recognition of the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism, the next section considers policy initiatives introduced by successive

²⁸ *Ibid.*

governments designed to challenge, disrupt and dismantle the networks responsible for encouraging British Muslims to pursue terrorism.

Policy Initiatives

Until the London bombings in 2005, there were no specific policy initiatives designed to disrupt the organisation or activities of Islamic fundamentalist Muslims in the UK. Following the 2001 terrorist attack in New York, the government developed and shortly afterwards in 2003, introduced a comprehensive counter terrorism strategy known formally as CONTEST.²⁹ This was organised around four key strands:

- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks
- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism
- Protect: to strengthen our protection against terrorist attacks
- Prepare: where an attack cannot be stopped, to mitigate its impact

Considered a “soft measure”, the least developed element (upon its initial release) was “Prevent”. Notwithstanding the failed 2004 “fertilizer bomb plot”, ministers were seemingly ignorant of how Islamic fundamentalism served as an incubator for “home grown terrorism”.³⁰ However, when four British Muslims carried out the first contemporary domestic suicide bombing in 2005, the need to understand and target factors driving radicalisation became immediately apparent. Seven home office working groups, operating under the banner “preventing extremism together”, developed a series of practical recommendations designed to challenge the core

²⁹ Home Office, ‘Project CONTEST: The Government’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy’, *UK Parliament*, September 2009, <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm77/7703/7703.pdf>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

³⁰ Staff Reporter, ‘UK Fertiliser Bomb plot’, *BBC News Online*, undated, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/guides/457000/457032/html/n1page6.stm>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

fundamentalist movement.³¹ In 2007, the government issued a revised version of “Prevent”, backing new measures with funding of around £140m per year.³²

In this new counter-radicalisation era, various community-based projects received financial assistance to challenge the core political narratives promoted by extremist preachers.³³ Despite its ambitious and well-meaning intentions, the “Prevent” programme has been consistently plagued by criticism and accusations that it lacks credibility and a sincere appreciation of what motivates British Muslims to pursue terrorism. Giving little credence to the impact of foreign policy, prevent has sought to convince would be jihadists and potential terrorists that they are simply “misguided” and that true Muslims reject violence even in defence of co-religionists. In 2010, a committee of cross party politicians warned that “Prevent” had stigmatised and alienated the very individuals it sought to engage.³⁴ More damning in their critique, the committee suggested the entire project had backfired and it was difficult to know what good it was doing - if any.³⁵

By contrast, one of the most controversial policy initiatives heavily pursued in 2014, has involved the confiscation of British passports. Troubled by the terrorist threat posed by returning jihadists, ministers have sought to deny anyone suspected of engaging in terrorism either at home or abroad, the ability to travel freely. For Islamic fundamentalists resident in the UK, it has made it difficult for them to pursue jihad in Syria. Of greater concern to civil liberties groups however, are the cases in which individuals already fighting abroad have been prevented from returning to the UK. Between 2005 and 2012, the British government confiscated the passports of

³¹ Home Office, ‘Preventing Extremism Together: Report and Government Response’, *Department for Communities and Local Government*, 10 November 2005. <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN04766.pdf>, (accessed 13 January 2015)

³² A. Kundnani, ‘Spooked! How not to prevent violent extremism’, *Institute of Race Relations*, October 2009, <http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/spooked.pdf>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

³³ House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, ‘Preventing Violent Extremism Sixteenth Report of Session 2009-10’, *UK Parliament*, 16th March 2010, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/65.pdf>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.18

³⁵ D. Casciani, ‘Prevent extremism strategy 'stigmatising', warn MPs’, *BBC News Online*, 30th March 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8593862.stm>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

approximately twenty individuals accused of engaging in terrorism. At present, this pre-emptive policy designed to prevent potential suicide bombers returning to the UK is restricted to those with dual nationality. However, in 2013, Home Secretary Teresa May announced her intention to find a way around international rules in order to revoke British citizenship, even if it meant leaving terrorist suspects effectively stateless.³⁶ In the 17th report of the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Counter-terrorism, government identifies the withdrawal of passports as a vital tool in preventing UK citizens from travelling to foreign conflicts.³⁷ MPs expressed surprise that although the number of foreign fighters leaving the UK for Syria is estimated to be in the low hundreds, this measure has been used only 14 times since April 2013.

The initiative of removing passports from potential foreign fighters resident in the UK has been controversial. It follows the embarrassing disappearance of two individuals subject to control orders (TPIM's) restricting their movement and interaction.³⁸ Opposition MP Diane Abbott rejects the entire government policy on the confiscation of passports, noting how the debate around "citizenship-stripping" operates contrary to the common law presumption of innocence. Speaking publically on the issue, Abbot has said, 'we are talking about terror suspects. Nowadays in Parliament, saying suspected someone of terrorist activity is enough for the political class to assume that that person does not deserve due processes.'³⁹ On reflection, it is important to recognise that individuals engaged in the Islamic fundamentalist movement often gain the terrorist label despite having no intention to commit violence against non-combatants. Persons subjected to control orders have in the majority of cases engaged in nothing more than the dissemination of fundamentalist

³⁶ A. Ross and P. Galey, 'British Home Secretary Waited Until Terror Suspect Was Abroad Before Stripping Citizenship', *Centre for Research on Globalization*, 13th February 2014, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/british-home-secretary-waited-until-terror-suspect-was-abroad-before-stripping-citizenship/5368702>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

³⁷ House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 'Counter-terrorism Seventeenth Report of Session 2013– 14', *UK Parliament*, 30th April 2014, p.35, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmhaff/231/231.pdf>, (accessed 5th January 2015)

³⁸ Staff Reporter, 'Control measure terror suspect missing since December', *BBC News Online*, 11th February 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21417303>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

³⁹ Ross and Galey 'British Home Secretary Waited Until Terror Suspect Was Abroad Before Stripping Citizenship'

literature. Even the strongest cases are often based on nothing more than the mere association of individuals with a spectre of an alleged link to a terrorist organisation e.g. Al-Qaeda.

Preventing British Muslims from pursuing Jihad may on the surface appear an effective element of any overall counter terrorism strategy. However, proscribing an individual's perceived religious duty creates the potential for "home grown" terrorism. Frustrated by the inability to participate in Jihad and inspired by extremist literature encouraging them to 'do what they can where they can', British fundamentalist Muslims may decide to act unilaterally, resulting in acts of terrorism including lone wolf style attacks involving nothing more than weapons found in the home e.g. knives and axes. In extreme cases, society may be threatened by the deployment of improvised explosive devices targeting public spaces. Consequently, if a UK resident is deemed so great a risk as to have their passport confiscated, then additional measures discussed below in the final section of this chapter must also be considered.

In May 2013, a prominent member of the Islamic fundamentalist movement murdered an off-duty soldier outside his barracks in South East London. For several years, Michael Adebalajo appears to have been active in the fundamentalist movement. He attended demonstrations, recruited new members and like many of his peers, sought to pursue Jihad overseas. Responding to this textbook example of how the fundamentalist movement incubates terrorism, the British government announced a specific new policy in which they would use civil powers to disrupt the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Prime Minister David Cameron suggested new special "Anti-Social Behaviour Orders" (ASBO's) provided the solution necessary to disrupt the organisation of fundamentalists and curtail their activities.⁴⁰ Referred to in the media as "extremism disruption orders", the proposed new sanction would be issued to individuals by a high court judge based on a balance of probabilities rather than the

⁴⁰ Staff Reporter, 'Dozens of hate clerics face being silenced by new anti-terror Asbos', *Daily Mail Online*, 22nd December 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2527843/Dozens-hate-clerics-face-silenced-new-anti-terror-Asbos.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

stronger, historic legal test of ‘beyond reasonable doubt’. Subsequently, civil servants identified twenty-five preachers who they planned to effectively silence.⁴¹

BBC News journalist, Dominic Casciani notes that for many years, ministers and policymakers argued over the response to fundamentalism because neither have ever been entirely sure of how to define the term.⁴² According to the Home Office, in the domain of religiously motivated terrorism, Islamism presents the most threatening to Western values, interests and society.⁴³ Consequently, the new “extremism asbo” based on a revised definition of “extremism” is due to include opposition to western values of democracy and human rights: specifically it will target anyone seeking to direct British Muslims towards fundamentalism. Former Attorney General, Dominic Grieve, QC has expressed concerns about the proposed new powers to challenge extremism, suggesting that it could result in the prosecution of individuals simply for expressing a point of view.⁴⁴ At this stage it is unclear how the orders might work in practice and whether they would be used against persons who legitimately claim to be doing nothing more than citing Islamic scripture. Perhaps the most flawed assumption of this new policy is the continued emphasis on top down radicalisation. There is little to suggest that self-radicalisation through the Internet and within closed networks would be in any way impacted by this new measure.

Legislation

Even before the major terrorist attacks on 9/11 and 7/7, legislation designed to prevent the funding of Irish paramilitaries ultimately impacted on members of the fundamentalist movement. The Terrorism Act 2000 was perhaps the most significant legislative change for decades and made it a criminal offence to raise funds for any

⁴¹ Staff Reporter, ‘Theresa May pledges new measures to tackle British jihadis’, 23rd August 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28905776>, (accessed 5th December 2014)

⁴² D. Casciani, ‘Analysis: Can extremism plan work?’, *BBC News Online*, 30th September 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-29427807>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁴³ Home Office, ‘CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism’, *UK Parliament*, July 2011, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97995/strategy-contest.pdf, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁴⁴ Casciani ‘Analysis: Can extremism plan work?’

group proscribed by the British government.⁴⁵ Theoretically, this put an end to the flow of vital money from Pakistani Muslims in Birmingham to Kashmiri insurgents, an activity that was overt and commonplace in Mosques during the 1990s. However, several convictions in respect of “terrorist fundraising” demonstrate how the practice continued unabated. After 2001, the primary destination of financial support shifted towards Afghanistan; members of the fundamentalist movement regularly sent finance and later equipment including night vision goggles to mujahedeen fighters.

In 2014, fundamentalist movement preacher Abu Hamza Al-Masri stood trial in the US in relation to the kidnap of tourists in Yemen in 1998. Despite his many years of promoting jihad thus helping to maintain an environment conducive to terrorism, in the UK his sole charge (in 2004) under the Terrorism Act was for the possession of an “illegal” document. Found at his home, the *Encyclopaedia of the Afghani Jihad* contained information ‘of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism’. At the time of his initial arrest, there was no law against encouraging individuals to pursue violence abroad. MI5 officers approached Al-Masri in 1997 informing him that his speeches did not currently break the law.⁴⁶ Following the introduction of the Terrorism Act 2000, MI5 and Police Special Branch shifted their position slightly advising Masri he was walking on a tightrope, albeit there was no specific instruction to stop.⁴⁷ Subsequently, preachers like Masri would continue for many more years promoting fundamentalist ideology before witnessing any kind of government clampdown.

In 2005, lawyers suggested that under existing legislation, it would be difficult to prosecute fundamentalist preachers thought to be inspiring future terrorists. Leading human rights solicitor, Geoffrey Bindman, argued at the time that apparent support for suicide bombing and calls for Muslims to install terror into the hearts of

⁴⁵ UK Government, ‘The Terrorism Act 2000’, Chapter 11, Section 15, 20 July 2000, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/section/15>, (accessed 5 January 2015)

⁴⁶ J. Slack and D. Bates, ‘How spies and police courted Abu Hamza: Twelve secret meetings revealed as sobbing hate cleric tells New York court how his hands were blown off in Pakistan’, *Daily Mail Online*, 9th May 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2623830/How-spies-police-courted-hate-cleric-Meetings-revealed-Hamza-sobs-hands-blown-Pakistan-New-York-terror-trial.html>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

nonbelievers might not be specific enough to warrant criminal proceedings.⁴⁸ Implying the possibility of prosecution under laws prohibiting the solicitation of murder, however, Bindham suggested that if preachers told followers to go out and blow themselves up on crowded tube stations, this might constitute an offence and they could be prosecuted accordingly.⁴⁹ Commenting on the subject in 2005, Duncan Lamont, senior partner at a leading UK law firm has observed that preachers are intelligent people who are very careful about what they say and do.⁵⁰

By introducing the Terrorism Act 2005, lawmakers sought to address the complicated issue of what ministers now judged to be the glorification of terrorism.⁵¹ Responding to the new law, Lamont suggested that Omar Bakri's description of the 7/7 Bombers as the "fantastic four" and comments made by Abu Izzadeen about the destruction of tall buildings would most likely fall foul of this new legislation.⁵² Specifically, Lamont argues that 'if you could satisfy a jury that he [Izzadeen] meant 9/11, then under what is proposed you have him bang to rights'.⁵³ Yet government were not entirely powerless before the new laws were introduced.. For example, in 2003, prosecutors successfully convicted Abdullah el-Faisal (though to have radicalised the London bombers) under the 1861 Offences against the Person Act.⁵⁴ Evidence in court showed that he had solicited the murder of Jews, Hindus and Americans within sermons delivered at various fundamentalist movement events across the country.

In addition to restricting the glorification of terrorism, the Terrorism Act 2005 also introduced a new measure designed to significantly curtail the liberty of persons

⁴⁸ A. Hussain, 'Undercover in the Academy of Hatred', *Times Online*, 8th August 2015, reprinted and commented on by *The Figtree* [online blog], <http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=7680>, (accessed 17th December 2014)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ UK Government, 'The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005', Chapter 2, Section 1, 11 March 2005, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/2/contents>, (accessed 5 January 2015)

⁵² Hussain 'Undercover in the Academy of Hatred'

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

suspected of being involved in terrorism.⁵⁵ Known as “control orders”, anyone subjected, faced restrictions including where they lived, whom they associated with as well as access to communication devices etc. In April 2006, the Administrative Court ruled the review procedure for control orders incompatible with article 6 of the European convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Home Secretary at the time Charles Clarke rejected the finding, claiming the legislation to be fully compliant with the ECHR as it contained rigorous safeguards to protect the rights of individuals.⁵⁶ Following a change in government in 2010, the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 eventually replaced control orders. The updated legislation provides new powers to allow the Home Secretary to impose sanctions on the behaviour of a specified individual via means of a TPIM notice. The main difference between a TPIM and a control order is that the former has a maximum length of two years while the latter could be rolled over year on year without limit. While control orders could be imposed on reasonable *suspicion* of involvement in terrorism; TPIMs required reasonable *belief*. Persons subject to a TPIM notice are entitled to use a phone and a computer albeit with both activities closely monitored by the Security Services.

The most controversial issue in respect to TPIMs compared with control orders has been the removal of a power allowing terrorist suspects to be relocated. Both MI5 and counter terrorism police argued that relocation has served as an effective means of disrupting networks concentrated in a particular area. By relocating *facilitators* and preventing them from communicating with other fundamentalists, it made absconding and support for the pursuit of overseas jihad far more difficult. David Anderson, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, makes the importance of relocation clear in his 2014 report. Having examined use of the measure within the previous control orders, he notes, ‘a power to relocate subjects away from their home areas would be of real practical assistance to the police and MI5 in distancing subjects from their associates and reducing the risk of abscond. It would also facilitate monitoring, save money and could help restore faith in a TPIM regime that has withered on the vine’.⁵⁷ Anderson concludes by commenting that after

⁵⁵ UK Government ‘The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005’

⁵⁶ Charles Clarke Written Ministerial Statement, 24 April 2006 col. 32WS

⁵⁷ D. Anderson QC, ‘Relocation Relocation Relocation’, [online blog], *Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation*, 25th November 2014,

having read his report, the government had decided to re-introduce the power of relocation within the counter-terrorism and security bill currently awaiting Royal Assent as of January 2015.⁵⁸ Suggesting there has been a significant game change due to the number of British fundamentalist Muslims fighting in Syria, London Metropolitan Police chief Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe told the BBC in August 2014 that: ‘measures similar to control orders should be re-introduced to tackle the threat from Britons who fight with militants in Syria and Iraq’.⁵⁹ The problem with TPIMs he argues is that they cannot force a terrorist suspect to live in a specific location, ‘and that puts quite a lot of responsibility on all the security services’.⁶⁰

Front Line Services

Until 2006, the remit of Police Counter Terrorism investigations fell to the *Anti-Terrorist Branch* (SO13) and *Special Branch* (SO12). Prompted by the devastating events of July 7th 2005, these two organisations merged to form a new counter terrorism unit. Today, Counter Terrorism Command (CTC) also known as SO15 employs over 1,500 Police Officers and staff as well as a number of investigators based overseas, in particular Pakistan. Discussing operational priorities in terms of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism before 7/7, former SO15 commander Richard Walton comments:

Investigations of any London based Islamists only occurred at the behest of Foreign Governments - Operation Challenge is an example of this. The most common investigations involved the GIA. Locations associated with calls to pursue terrorism, for example, The Four Feathers social club and Finsbury

<https://terrorismlegislationreviewer.independent.gov.uk/relocation-relocation-relocation/#more-2174>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁵⁸ UK Government, ‘Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill (HC Bill 142)’, *UK Parliament*, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2014-2015/0142/cbill_2014-20150142_en_1.htm, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁵⁹ Staff Reporter, ‘Met chief backs 'new control orders' to tackle jihadists’, *BBC News Online*, 27th August 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28950562>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Park Mosque were not a priority at the time and there was little attempt to monitor activities going on behind their closed doors.⁶¹

The events of 9/11 also led to a greater level of information sharing between Security Services both domestically and internationally. Due to a fear this attack would lead to the start of a long-term Irish style bombing campaign, the number of British police officers dedicated to investigating Islamic fundamentalist terrorism increased tenfold.⁶² Almost immediately, Counter terrorism officers at Scotland Yard developed a greater understanding of Islamism and began to recognize that fundamentalist preachers and facilitators were helping to construct an environment that would eventually lead to Islamic terrorism plots within the UK.⁶³

Walton has explained that after London bombings in 2005, it became possible to disrupt more attempts to pursue terrorism because of an overwhelming increase in resources available to his unit, SO15.⁶⁴ Although British Muslims continued to travel to the tribal areas of Pakistan for training, facilitated by experienced handlers in the UK, SO15 now held a far greater insight and more intelligence on these visits due to an increase in the number of Police informants within the Muslim community. Controversially, after 7/7, the intelligence and security services began profiling individuals suspected of involvement in the fundamentalist movement. Stop and Search, undercover investigations, and border agency questioning were all now focused on those with the potential to cross the line and pursue terrorism. The three UK intelligence and security service gave Islamic extremism a higher priority and their budgets broadly doubled between 2002 and 2006.⁶⁵ Blunkett acknowledges this broad approach to profiling terrorist suspects and communities took place and suspects that under the surface and despite opposition from liberty groups, it continues to this day.⁶⁶ Reflecting on the difficult balance between security and justice faced policy makers, Blunkett adds, 'if a particular community is host to a particular form of terrorism, then you are bound to profile that particular diaspora, and

⁶¹ Author interview with Richard Walton, London, 7th August 2013

⁶² Walton *Author Interview*

⁶³ Counter Terrorism Officer *Author Interview*

⁶⁴ Walton *Author Interview*

⁶⁵ R. Aldrich, *GCHQ: The Uncensored Story of Britain's Most Secret Intelligence Agency* (London; Harper Collins, 2010) pp.509-32.

⁶⁶ Blunkett *Author Interview*

when you do, you are accused of discriminating in a way that is almost unavoidable'.⁶⁷

Seven months after the London bombings, in January 2006, MI5 announced plans to recruit an additional 200 officers, the majority of whom would be devoted entirely to countering the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalists based in the UK. Commenting in 2009, Patrick Mercer MP, the chair of the Home Affairs sub-committee on terrorism told *The Daily Telegraph* that the September 11 attack in New York should have been a catalyst for drastic expansion of the security services. Yet 'it took an attack on this country for such measures to be started'.⁶⁸ Mr Mercer was responding to allegations that in the wake of the London bombings, MI5 inadvertently recruited up to six al-Qaeda sympathisers as part its rapid expansion plans.

Following the comprehensive examination above of how progressive governments have sought to challenge the fundamentalist movement, the final section of this chapter presents a series of policy recommendations. Suggestions put forth by the author seek to build upon the existing counter terrorism framework discussed above which has been continuously developed and reworked over the last ten years.

Shutting down the Facilitation Networks

The terrorism Act 2006 made it a criminal offence for a British citizen to attend any kind of training camp operated by a proscribed organisation. Merely stepping foot inside such a camp is enough to warrant a prison sentence of up to ten years. In practice it is very difficult to prove any offence has taken place due to the often-lawless nature of areas where training and fighting take place. With a significant number of British Muslims travelling to Pakistan every year to visit family, marry and attend religious schools (Madrassas), detecting and disrupting those intent on pursuing jihad has generally proved difficult. However, due to an increase in the number of informants and greater co-operation with Pakistani security forces since

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ C. Hope, 'MI5 targeted by Islamic extremists in rushed recruitment drive after July 2005 attacks on London', *Telegraph Online*, 1st August 2009, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/5949775/MI5-targeted-by-Islamic-extremists-in-rushed-recruitment-drive-after-July-2005-attacks-on-London.html, (accessed 13th February 2015)

2005, the security services now possess far more intelligence on the activity.⁶⁹ Consequently, today, the police and border agency will either stop recruits on their way out (due to a tip off) or if this fails, prevent trained jihadists from returning to the UK by cancelling their citizenship wherever possible.⁷⁰

Former Home Secretary David Blunkett has said that during his time in office, attempts to shut down the pipelines between the UK and Pakistan proved largely unsuccessful. He acknowledges that in retrospect, his administration could have done much more - both in terms of disrupting the networks but also in finding out who was behind them. Reflecting more generally on the situation in light of the 2013 Edward Snowden fiasco, Blunkett comments:

The presumption would have been that you identified where the problem was and you took them out. Now we live in a much more transparent and concerned world actually at the moment. People worry about what GCHQ or you know the equivalent across the, the NSA are up to. Actually, we have never been in a more transparent situation than we are today.⁷¹

Blunkett suggests that due to increased oversight, the British government can no longer adopt controversial methods to disrupt the facilitation and training process. Unsurprisingly and despite the aggressive war on terror, British Muslims continue to gain the military training needed to pursue jihad. While camps operated by Al-Qaeda have certainly declined, Kashmiri insurgent groups in Pakistan continue to welcome new recruits from the UK. The seemingly never-ending dispute between Pakistan and India over the future of Kashmir ensures that Islamic insurgents continue to operate with impunity. As fundamentalist Muslims, they are religiously obliged to facilitate individuals travelling from the UK who express a desire to fight for the cause.

Since 2010, the Syrian civil war has become the number one destination for those seeking to pursue jihad. In contrast with Kashmir and Pakistan that have largely lost favour amongst fundamentalists, British Muslims now find it much easier to

⁶⁹ Walton *Author Interview*

⁷⁰ M. Chorley, M. 'Terror suspects to lose UK citizenship and become 'stateless' as Theresa May faces fresh pressure over controls', *Daily Mail Online*, 12th November 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2502717/Terror-suspects-lose-UK-citizenship-stateless-says-Theresa-May.html>, (accessed 4th March 2015)

⁷¹ Blunkett *Author Interview*

simply travel to Turkey where they are easily able to cross the border into Syria. Due to the extensive nature of social media, there is a growing amount of primary data showing how British Muslims have trained with various insurgent groups such as Al Nusra and the Islamic State and are now fighting on the front line. So concerned are the British government over their ability to shut down the facilitation network between the UK and Syria that in 2014, prosecutors warned Britons who joined the civil war, they would face prosecution and potential life sentences on their return.⁷²

Policy Recommendations

Reflecting on the implications of the main arguments in the thesis, this final section concludes with a set of balanced policy recommendations. The emphasis must be on how to challenge the Islamic fundamentalist environment from which UK domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims has emerged. While the threat of terrorism, in particular that posed by returning British jihadists from Syria is indeed severe, it is important that the foundations upon which western society are based i.e. freedom, democracy and liberty, are not compromised in the relentless pursuit of national security. To do so would invite the question of what exactly it is that the intelligence and security community are seeking to protect in the first place. Dostoevsky once wrote, 'you can judge a society by how well it treats its prisoners'.⁷³

Counter-terrorism measures can be counter-productive. In December 2014, a senior official within the Islamic State (IS) explained to the *Guardian* newspaper, 'if there was no American prison in Iraq, there would be no IS now. Bucca was a factory. It made us all. It built our ideology.'⁷⁴ Discussing the treatment of Muslims detainees in Iraq at locations such as the Bucca prison, special aide to all US ambassadors, Ali Khedery, has commented that even top American officers came to believe the prisons had 'actually become radicalising elements and were being used to plan and organise,

⁷² N. Bentham, 'Brits who fight in Syria face life in jail', *Standard Online*, 3rd February 2014, <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/exclusive-brits-who-fight-in-syria-face-life-in-jail-9104171.html>, (accessed 11th November 2014)

⁷³ F. Dostoevsky, *The House of the Dead*, 1862

⁷⁴ M. Chulov, 'ISIS The Inside Story', *Guardian Online*, 11th December 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/-sp-isis-the-inside-story?CMP=share_btn_fb, (accessed 17th December 2014)

to appoint leaders and launch operations.’⁷⁵ In preventing the next generation of British fundamentalist extremist terrorists, policy makers must not compromise on the values that distinguish good citizens from those who would harm innocent civilians.

In response to the death of soldier Lee Rigby in May 2013, the British Government launched a new counter-extremism taskforce.⁷⁶ Prime Minister, David Cameron, charged the group with examining the range of powers currently available for “dealing” with individuals responsible for promoting an ideology alleged to inspire terrorism. Established thinking on the subject of “top down radicalisation”, suggests that to avoid prosecution, preachers will act merely as signposts and interpreters of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths.⁷⁷ In defending their claims to freedom of speech, preachers argue that God commands Muslims to defend themselves and co-religionists and as such, they are merely instruments of his will. Therefore, to silence them, is to silence the word of God. Consequently, the taskforce sought to identify areas where the current approach had failed and to agree practical steps in order to fight against all forms of extremism without encroaching on freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

One of the key findings established in the UK counter extremism task force report published in December 2013, underlines the central thesis outlined in this dissertation. In particular that, ‘it is often too easy for preachers and groups to spread extremist views which can lead people into terrorism, while at the same time being careful not to contravene existing laws on incitement to violence or glorifying terrorism.’⁷⁸ In recognition of this, policy makers confront the problem of how to

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ R. Brant, ‘Extremism taskforce to be set up after Woolwich’, *BBC News Online*, 25th May 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22670184>, (accessed 12th November 2014)

⁷⁷ L Fenstermacher and L. Kuznar and A. Spechhard, ‘Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats’, January 2010, <http://www.brynmawr.edu/psychology/documents/McCauleyMoskalenko.pdf>, (accessed 13th January 2015); T. Precht, ‘An assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions for counter radicalisation measures’, *Danish Ministry of Justice*, December 2007, http://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Arbejdsomraader/Forskning/Forskningspuljen/2011/2007/Home_grown_terrorism_and_Islamist_radicalisation_in_Europe_-_an_assessment_of_influencing_factors__2_.pdf, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁷⁸ Brant ‘Extremism taskforce to be set up after Woolwich’

disrupt the fundamentalist environment without limiting individual liberty, or how to find a balance between challenging narratives that promote terrorism while protecting the heart of liberal democracy. Before answering this important question, it is necessary to firstly recap on what this author has previously discussed in terms of the radicalisation process. Two distinct pathways may lead an individual towards pursuing terrorism. Firstly, radicalisation can be thought of as a process of personal development whereby an individual adopts ever more extreme political or politic-religious ideas and goals, becoming convinced that the attainment of these goals justifies extreme methods.⁷⁹ Secondly, there exists a top down approach in which second-generation British Muslims and new converts are seduced by the fiery speeches of radical preachers such as Omar Bakri Mohammed'.⁸⁰

The latter pathway has been responsible for the majority of British Muslims who have progressed from moderate to fundamentalist to extremist terrorist. Within fundamentalist discourse, ideologues present a real life scenario designed to evoke strong, painful emotions amongst their audience. Common examples include the occupation of Palestine and the “Shock and Awe” bombing campaign that began the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The writer or speaker will then quote either a particular verse in the Quran where Allah has issued a command or a narration in the Hadith describing what the Prophet Mohammed said or did. Connecting the two together, the aim of the fundamentalist preacher is to encourage Muslims to recognise and accept a specific Islamic response to the situation they first outlined. For example, if western soldiers occupy Muslim land, then God has commanded they be removed. Preachers may not themselves encourage violence in order to achieve this, but will instead urge the audience to ask, ‘what would the Prophet Mohammed have done in such a situation?’ When accused of inciting terrorism, the defence will argue the defendant has simply acted as a signpost to material already in the public domain.

Freedom of Speech

⁷⁹ L. Ongerling, ‘Homegrown Terrorism and Radicalisation in the Netherlands: Experiences, Explanations and Approaches’. *Testimony to the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee*, 2007

⁸⁰ E. Hussain, *The Islamist*, London, Penguin, 2007, p.82

In light of the events in Paris in early 2015, Islamic fundamentalists asked why they are not afforded the same rights as those who insult their religion. Freedom of speech protection in Europe and North America is extremely strong. Rightly or wrongly, the “show and tell” style of *laying the foundations* for radicalisation appears safeguarded and is beyond reproach. Directing followers to verses in the Quran or the Hadith is not and should not be a criminal offence. However, what happens next, the actual *radicalisation* process, has rightly become the target of government intervention. Fundamentalist preachers will supplement religious text and or personally interpret elements out of context or selectively in a manner largely rejected by the majority of non-fundamentalist Muslims. For example, Jordanian cleric Abu Qatada and the late Osama Bin Laden both raised the highly charged issue of American troops stationed in the Arab Peninsula.

When the first Gulf War concluded in 1991, a significant number of foreign troops remained. Determined to build up opposition to this perceived blasphemy, the two staunch fundamentalists invited fellow Muslims to consider what the Prophet thought about foreign troops on Muslim lands. According to the Hadith, Mohammed instructed that no two religions might exist in the Arab Peninsula. Therefore, the implication given by this Hadith is that Christians and Jews must be banished. Contrasted with non-fundamentalists who might advocate diplomacy and negotiation as a way forward, Bin Laden and Qatada urged followers to pursue a more direct, more violent response through insurgency and terrorism. Fundamentalists were told to adhere to the will of Mohammed and undertake combative Jihad in order to cleanse the Arab region of all unbelievers. Diplomacy and non-violent protest are inappropriate western concepts ill-suited to the fundamentalist ideology. In support of their *fatwa*’s (Islamic rulings) Bin Laden and Qatada will again take out of context, supplement or deliberately misinterpret elements of Islamic doctrine in order to gain legitimacy for acts of terrorism.

In light of the above discussion, how can the radicalisation process be disrupted without outlawing the primary sources upon which extremist material is so often based? Certainly, there is no suggestion the government treat the Quran or the Hadiths as “extremist literature” and thus proscribe them as articles considered useful in the preparation of terrorism. What then is the solution? This author recommends the introduction of legislation that makes “reckless interpretation” of religious doctrine a criminal offence. For a successful conviction, prosecutors must establish

that a defendant knowingly cited text such in a way that any reasonable person would be encouraged to commit an offence outlawed by the terrorism acts 2000 and 2006. In short, what is being suggested is a kind of ‘pre-cursor’ criminal offence, one that tackles the political ideology responsible for inspiring British Muslims to engage in terrorism. For example, in respect of American soldiers stationed in the Arab Peninsula, if fundamentalist preacher Qatada taught his followers that the Prophet Mohammed forbids two religions in the region and therefore it is their duty to speak out verbally and by way of demonstration, this would be acceptable. However, for him to discuss the situation within the same narrative in which America is accused of murdering women and children and to conclude by stating that God has commanded every able Muslim to retaliate through the pursuit of jihad: this could surely be argued in court as having the sole purpose of inciting a person to commit terrorism.

Internet

Published in Nov 2014, the Intelligence Select Committee (ISC) report into the killing of Soldier Lee Rigby, noted how MI5 pays little attention to threats made online.⁸¹ In oral evidence given by the Director General to the ISC concerning online threats of terrorism, he made it clear that ‘... those sorts of things said, and worse, on these sorts of [sites] are very common...the vast majority of it translates into no action at all.’⁸² Consequently, the idea that radicalisation can be disrupted through simply increasing the amount of resources charged with ‘policing’ the Internet is misplaced and untenable. As soon as police investigate extremist material and remove it, new threats and new material quickly appears elsewhere. The Internet is too vast and anarchically structured to monitor or control; it should not therefore be the focus of counter terrorism strategy. Valuable resources must not be wasted on fire fighting the distribution of extremist material; one cannot disrupt the dissemination of ideas, especially given the increasing availability and anonymity of Internet access. Providing alternative narratives to extremist material online is important, but this strategy can only hope to achieve success if pushed directly to individuals before they

⁸¹ Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, ‘Report on the intelligence relating to the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby’, *UK Parliament*, November 2014, p.78, https://sites.google.com/a/independent.gov.uk/isc/files/20141125_ISC_Woolwich_Report%28website%29.pdf?attredirects=1, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁸² *Ibid.*

have become radicalised. It is unlikely that someone reading for example *Inspire* magazine, would suddenly decide to navigate to a website where Islamic scholars contradict testimony given in the publication. If the government is to maintain a website that challenges fundamentalist ideology, then initiatives must also be put in place to encourage members of the Muslim community at risk of radicalisation to explore such material, before they look for answers elsewhere on forums populated by Islamic fundamentalists. Whether this should be incorporated into the school curriculum remains a controversial question and few teachers in primary or secondary schools have been comfortable with the “Prevent” agenda.

Disrupting the organisation of Fundamentalist Muslims

Without the environment socially constructed by the organisation of British fundamentalist Muslims, the political ideology that encourages the pursuit of jihad would be disrupted. To be radicalised, it is insufficient for a person simply to read “extremist literature” on the Internet. Respected academic Peter Neumann at Kings College London explains that: ‘Self-radicalisation and self-recruitment via the Internet with little or no relation to the outside world rarely happens, and there is no reason to suppose that this situation will change in the near future’.⁸³ Fundamentalists must congregate freely amongst others who share the same ideas, each seeking to outbid the other in demonstrating commitment to the cause. Social bonds are a critical element of religious motivation and evidence suggests that British fundamentalist terrorists socialise within like-minded groups.⁸⁴ In particular, Silke has argued that ‘recruits for jihad and terrorism always belong to the section of society that supports or shares the aims, grievances and ambitions of the terrorist group’.⁸⁵ Consequently, British counter terrorism strategy must focus on disrupting the *organisation* of

⁸³ T. Stevens and P. Neumann, ‘Countering Online Radicalisation A Strategy for Action’, *International Centre for the Study of radicalisation*, January 2009, <http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/1236768491ICSROnlineRadicalisationReport.pdf>, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁸⁴ Intelligence and Security Committee, ‘Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on July 7 2005’, *Cabinet Office*, 2006, http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/isc_7july_report.pdf, (accessed 13th January 2015)

⁸⁵ A. Silke, ‘Holy warriors: exploring the psychological processes of jihadi radicalization’, *European Journal of Criminology*, 2008, Vol. 5, Issue 1, pp.99-123

fundamentalist Muslims. Evidence presented in this dissertation clearly demonstrates that the UK Islamic fundamentalist environment incubates volunteers for jihad as well as a minority of extremist terrorists. Therefore, in order to prevent the next generation, the government must act decisively by isolating those individuals who call for the universal adoption of sharia and promote jihad as a legitimate means of self-defence. Where relocation is not possible, the government should enforce civil orders preventing the wide association with known fundamentalists.

De-Radicalisation

Terrorist suspects who are known to the security services for carrying out fundamentalist activities, must be forced to attend de-radicalisation programmes with non-compliance leading to strict control orders. While some observers have suggested that so called 'de-radicalisation' or 'risk-reduction' programmes have little impact, the Saudi Ministry of Interior has determined that out of 120 former Guantanamo Bay detainees who graduated from their de-radicalisation program, only 25 later returned to terrorist activities. In return for agreeing to participate in a government approved counter radicalisation programme, control orders would be relaxed or rescinded. In support of this, it should be noted that it is often the case (we know this from reading letters sent by convicted terrorists to the NGO *Cage Prisoners*) that British Muslims who volunteer for terrorism have only a very basic grasp of their faith. It is common for convicted terrorists to learn far more about their religion during their time incarcerated than they knew beforehand.

Islamic fundamentalists cross the line and become terrorists not because of what they themselves read in the Quran, but more often, what others tell them it says. De-radicalisation should therefore be framed as Religious Education, compulsory for those who pass the threshold necessary to implement a control order. Having pursued jihad in Somalia, Michael Adebolajo had without question reached a stage whereby such intervention was both necessary and legitimate. Although not convicted of a criminal offence, he posed a clear and present danger to UK national security. Subjecting him to a control order would therefore have been a fair and reasonable balance between civil liberties and the need to protect society. Specifically, Adebolajo should have been forced to attend a de-radicalisation programme in order to challenge his extremist beliefs. Failure to comply would have led to increased restrictions

concerning his association with other fundamentalists, in particular his co-accused Michael Adebowale.

In the particular case of Adebolajo, the ISC report notes how he appeared on the periphery of five unique investigations and yet there was no ‘cumulative effect’ causing an increase in his threat level.⁸⁶ This failure in the process has been recognised by the security services, with changes now agreed to ensure persistent suspects do now attract greater attention and resources. The report also notes that the intelligence community did not attempt to divert either of the individuals away from the fundamentalist pathway that led them to kill soldier Lee Rigby. In cases of individuals already incarcerated for terrorism offences, British counter terrorism policy must include the opportunity for them to engage in an approved de-radicalisation programme. Fundamentalists, who turn their back on extremist political ideology, may be offered a reduction in their prison sentences. Put simply, if the opportunity afforded to the government from incarceration is not used to rehabilitate and challenge extremist ideas, then upon release, terrorists will almost certainly continue to engage in fundamentalist activities including most critically, the mobilisation of fellow Muslims.

The Road Ahead

The future landscape of UK domestic terrorism carried out by extreme British Islamic fundamentalists appears alarming. With an Islamic Caliphate now established in northern parts of Syria and Iraq, fundamentalists are revitalised by the seemingly genuine possibility of a world governed according to Sharia. Following the December 2014 US senate report into “enhanced interrogation” that amongst other contentious highlights, documented the torture of Muslims at black sites around the world; it is more likely that reprisals both in the UK and around the world will follow.⁸⁷ As of 2015, the Islamic fundamentalist movement in the UK continues to thrive, evidenced by the continued number of British Muslims joining the ranks of the Islamic State in

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ J. Slack, ‘Shaming of the West and the Covert up of the British Role’, *Daily Mail Online*, 9th December 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2867736/Shaming-West-Devastating-report-reveals-horrific-extent-CIA-torture-covers-Britain-s-role.html>, (accessed 17th December 2014)

their fight to overthrow President Assad and expand the Caliphate to encompass the whole of Iraq and Syria. Although harsh sentences given to British Muslims who have fought with ISIS might deter combatants from returning to the UK, they will do little to stop the radicalisation of a next generation sold on the idea of dying in order to protect the Islamic State. While the British government has proposed tougher anti-terrorism laws, there is little reason to believe that the current wave of new measures will have any impact on disrupting the fundamentalist movement. As recently as December 2014, police charged six Islamic fundamentalists in London with carrying out the task of facilitation concerning a plot to smuggle British would be Jihadists to Syria.⁸⁸

Britain will probably have to confront the difficult truth that it is not only fighting terrorism, it is fighting a wider ideology. Only by taking steps that significantly restrict the liberty of those involved in Islamic fundamentalism, can the British government hope to dismantle the environment from which domestic terrorism carried out by British Muslims has emerged. The monopoly of power – and indeed violence – must remain solely in the hands of the sovereign state, governments must not allow the organisation of non-state actors who promote a visceral political ideology and carry out activities designed to further the Manichean vision of a world dominated by a perverse interpretation of the Islamic faith.

⁸⁸ R. Camber, 'A Libyan 'arms dealer' carrying order for £18million of ammunition, two British 'jihadis' and 17 illegal migrants... all found in one lorry leaving Dover', *Daily Mail Online*, 16th December 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2874294/Former-British-boxing-champion-charged-alleged-plot-smuggle-jihadis-Syria.html>, (accessed 17th December 2014)

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